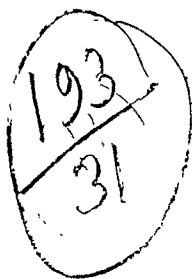


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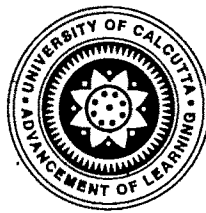
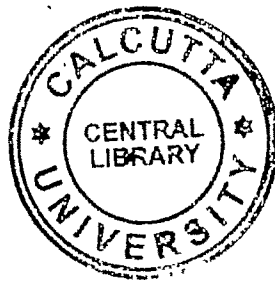


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Editor's Note

This issue of our journal offers varied fare. Beginning with classical literature it includes articles on early modern literature, the eighteenth century, the modern age, Indian writing in English, and what is really new to our publication,—Professor Bill Ashcroft's application of post-colonial theory to the art of the aborigine Australian artist, Lin Onus. This last is a lecture he delivered at Calcutta University, the prestigious Mohini Mohan Memorial Lecture, on 13th August 2004. The article retains the original lecture form but I am sorry to say much of the effect is lost because of our inability to print all the paintings that he showed to illustrate his points. Even then, I believe something has been achieved. This is the first time that we have been able to print paintings. The present issue is further enriched by the contribution of two Turkish colleagues who so enthusiastically responded to my call for articles.

I feel it is time to usher in a new trend in our journal and hope that subsequent issues will comprise more writings on interdisciplinary topics. New literatures should also be focussed and all that is 'english' find pride of place.

The main difficulty the editors face is an astounding dearth of first rate articles and that explains the slimness of the present volume. We hope the next issue will have better luck and we will not have to wait so long to receive contributions. The journal is a refereed one and the editors reserve the right to make necessary revisions. All contributions should conform to the MLA Stylesheet 6th Edition.

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The Architectonics of the Plot of *King Oedipus*

RAMKRISHNA BHATTACHARYA

Greek plays have a conventional and fairly rigid architectonics, as noted in Aristotle's *Poetics*, ch. 12. I intentionally use a rather rare term in order to avoid the more current one, 'structure', which nowadays has acquired multiple significances, depending on which school of literary theory one subscribes to. Aristotle, on his part, elected to employ readily intelligible terms. He referred to "the constituents of tragedy", "the separate sections into which the work is divided", namely : prologue, episode, exode and choral song, the last being subdivided into parode and stasimon.¹ Aristotle declares that 'These are common to all tragedies, songs from the actors and "commoi", however, are a characteristic only of some tragedies.'²

Following this division, we give below the architectonics of the plot of *King Oedipus* (*K.O.*).

1. prologue, vv. 1-150
2. parode, 151-215
3. first episode, 216-462
4. first stasimon, 463-512
5. second episode, 513-862, with commos, 649-697
6. second stasimon, 863-910
7. third episode, 911-1085
8. third stasimon, 1086-1109
9. fourth episode, 1110-1185
10. fourth stasimon, 1186-1222
11. exode, 1223-1530³

We need not go into the metrical pattern of the choral songs. A stasimon for example, is a choral song without anapaests or trochees. What we need to notice is that all the episodes do not contain a single 'episode' in the modern sense of the term. In modern short stories, there are sometimes two or several 'episodes' which, although separate, have overlapping boundaries. For example, Catherine Mansfield's "The Fly", a very short short-story, contains two distinct "episodes" : the Woodifield episode and the fly episode. In *K.O.*, there are several incidents within the first two episodes. In the first episode, for example, we find Oedipus (a) addressing a band of suppliants, and (b) having conversation with Creon upon his return from Delphi and (c) having an altercation with Teiresias. Similarly, in the second episode Oedipus (a) abuses Creon with Creon arguing back, and (b) engages in a close conference with Iocasta. Each episode is sub-divided into several incidents constituting the action of the play, first creating further complications (*desis*) and then (from.

the third episode onwards) leading to the unravelling (*lusis*).⁴ Each of the last two episodes has only one incident : the action becomes more and more specific; the problem of Oedipus's self-identity is finally resolved, causing a profound shock to all concerned.

Before going into further analysis of the architectonics of the plot, we may mention two precise turning points in *K.O.* The action of the play is not simple, but complex, i.e., the change of fortune is accompanied by both reversal (*peripeteia*) and discovery or recognition (*anagnorisis*).⁵ In *K.O.* the process of reversal starts with the arrival of the Corinthian Shepherd (v. 924) and the discovery takes place when Oedipus finishes questioning the Theban Shepherd (v. 1182). With the discovery the fourth episode is over and following the fourth stasimon we are inexorably led to the exode, in which we hear of Iocasta's suicide and Oedipus's self-blinding.

Such a neat, streamlined plot with one incident leading to the other and each episode relentlessly unveiling the dark deeds that happened in the past is rarely met with in any other tragedy. We propose to show how Sophocles constructs the plot. First, the technique of flashback. Sophocles was presumably the first to use it in drama, although he had to rely on *narrating* the events of the past, rather than *showing* them on stage or screen, as done now. Second, the courtroom atmosphere. Here too he seems to have led the way. Flashback coupled with the courtroom atmosphere makes *K.O.* a unique piece.

Flashback is employed in the prologue when Creon narrates how the Thebans came to know of Laius's death (vv. 106-131). We also hear of the Sphinx that had made the Thebans "let dark things go" and invited them to tackle the immediate problem, i.e., how to get rid of the riddling creature.

The most important flashbacks occur in the second episode. Iocasta tells Oedipus :

An oracle came to Laius once – I will not say from Phoebus himself but from his ministers – that the doom should overtake him to die by the hand of his child, who should spring from him and me. (vv. 711-14).

This did not trouble Oedipus so much as did what she said afterwards: Laius was murdered at a place where three highways met. Apparently Oedipus totally missed the words which followed, that Laius had pinned the newborn child's ankles together and had it thrown by other hands on a trackless mountain (vv. 715-19). Oedipus then embarks on a long flashback (vv. 774-812). He tells of his early youth at Corinth, how a drunken reveller had told him that he was not the true son of his father, how restless he became on hearing that and visited Delphi to know his true identity. But the oracle disappointed him, and finally unexpected circumstances forced him to kill an old man and his entourage. The whole of Oedipus's earlier life is encapsulated in this speech. The audience can now assemble all the pieces of information relating to what Oedipus knew to be the story of his life before he became the king of Thebes

and husband of Iocasta. Much later we come to know of his two sons and two daughters (vv. 1459-65). In the whole play here is a deeply moving personal touch. We have seen Oedipus the King, Oedipus the Husband and Oedipus the Investigator (to be more precise, prosecuting counsel and judge rolled into one). Now we come to know of Oedipus the doting father and his doting daughters, "who never knew [his] tables spread apart, or lacked their father's presence, but ever in all things shared [his] daily bread."

Now we can reconstruct the life-story of Oedipus right from his birth down to his self-blinding. It is revealed part by part. What happens after the final revelation is left unsaid. Oedipus insists on his banishment, true to the declaration he had earlier made to the citizens (vv. 132-46). The play, though it is seldom noticed or mentioned, is in fact open-ended. Creon refuses to grant Oedipus's appeal to be banished forthwith : he would rather seek the advice of Apollo again (vv. 1436-39). Oedipus's expostulation fails to move him (vv.1440-45).

So much for flashback. Now to the second technique employed by Sophocles, viz. the courtroom atmosphere in the play. Even the most cursory reader cannot fail to notice the predominance of interrogative sentences in *K.O.* The Prologue opens with Oedipus asking the suppliants to tell him what has made them come to him : "My children, latest-born to Cadmus who was of old, why are ye set before me thus with wreathed branches of suppliance, while the city reeks with incense, rings with prayers for health and cries of woe?" (vv. 1-5) The rest of the play proceeds through a series of questions followed by answers : Oedipus interrogates Creon, his interview with Teiresias turns into a two-way interrogation : the blind prophet even demands his right as a citizen to defend his own case (vv. 408-09).⁷

The same kind of examination and cross-examination is repeated when Oedipus confronts Creon (vv. 532-630) and continues until the Chorus and Iocasta are forced to intervene.

The last and the most decisive interrogation takes place in the fourth episode when the Theban Shepherd appears before Oedipus. Without any preliminaries Oedipus sets out to ascertain the identity of the Theban Shepherd, with the Corinthian Shepherd helping him. Once the identity is established, Oedipus starts examining him. Short, pointed questions follow questions (vv. 1119-81) till the painful truth is revealed bit by bit. Oedipus even threatens the witness with physical torture (unless he speaks the truth, vv. 1152-54). This is not undue harshness. Oedipus was following a custom well-known in ancient Greece : the evidence of a slave can be admitted only when it is extorted under duress.⁸ Iocasta did not tell Oedipus that the sole survivor of Laius's entourage was the same person who had been charged with the disposal of her first child. With the examination of the last witness every mystery is cleared. All that lay so long hidden now comes to light. Oedipus has his recognition (*anagnorisis*).

We cannot but notice that, like the story of Oedipus's life as told by Oedipus himself, the true version is unfolded in course of the examination of the last witness. His evidence proves beyond doubt that whatever Oedipus had known of himself as true was all wrong : he was in fact a foundling, Polybus and Merope of Corinth were merely his foster parents, and the prophecy he heard from Delphi, which he had so far tried to avert by all means, had already come true. On the very day he had learned it, he had killed his father and, after a few days, married his mother and subsequently begotten four children.

The tense courtroom atmosphere of the play, along with the technique of flashback, brings into open the true story of a man who was a victim of an old family curse.⁹ In spite of his sincere efforts to avert his destiny as a parricide, he was forced to kill his father, although unwillingly, in order to save his own life. Similarly it was at the insistence of the grateful citizens of Thebes that he was married to Iocasta, the elderly widow, without his ever suspecting that she was his mother. He has been lulled into believing, after he came back from Delphi, that Polybus and Merope were his true parents. He had promised never to return to Corinth, only to find that his destiny had unerringly sent him to his native *polis*. He thought he was a foreigner in Thebes (vv. 219-20). But the last interrogation brought out the fact that he was not a *turannos*, but a *basileus*, a hereditary ruler, as the Chorus finally address him (vv. 1201), and not a mere *anax* (king) (the Chorus and Theban Shepherd once addressed Oedipus so (v. 1173).

Aristotle is all praise for Sophocles. He upholds *King Oedipus* as a model tragedy.¹⁰ And Aristotle is basically a formalist. It is not so much the content of a play, or even the story, that makes him decide so. "The poet", he says, "must be a maker of plots rather than of verses, since he is a poet by virtue of his representations, and what he represents is actions" (*Poetics*, 9.9). Aristotle is never tired of repeating that plot, the ordering of the incidents, is "the most important" of the six elements of tragedy (6.9). "The incidents and the plot are the end aimed at in tragedy, and as always, the end is everything" (6.10). A good tragedian, he believes, is one who knows how to arrange the plot : ... if someone writes a series of speeches expressive of character, and well composed as far as thought and diction are concerned, he will still not achieve the proper effect of tragedy; this will be done much better by a tragedy which is less successful in its use of these elements, but which has a plot giving an ordered combination of incidents" (6.12). Aristotle further points out that "beginners can achieve accuracy in diction and the portrayal of character before they can construct a plot out of the incidents, and this could be said of almost all the earliest dramatic poets" (6.14).

How true these observations are can be judged from Sophocles's handling of the Oedipus legend. The legend was pretty well-known; other dramatists had also made use of it.¹¹ However, Sophocles alone succeeds in making his play, *King Oedipus*, synonymous with tragedy. This is solely due to his masterly

handling of the plot: the conscious reversal of the chronological order of events mixing flashbacks with flashforwards (i.e., the prophecies) and proceeding through a series of interrogations. He alternates narration (for example, Oedipus telling his story to Iocasta) with dialogue, all the while the Chorus oscillating between hope and despair. Yet the plot emerges “as a unified whole”, as Aristotle prefers : “its various incidents must be so arranged that if any one of them is differently placed or taken away the effect of wholeness will be seriously disrupted” (8.4). In spite of the back-and-forth movement, the plot of *King Oedipus* is tight-knit, and proceeds with remorseless logic to its catastrophic finale.

Notes and References

1. *Poetics*, 12.1. Trans. T.S. Dorsch in *Classical Literary Criticism*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1965, p. 47. I should, however, warn the readers that the authenticity of this section is still doubtful. O.B. Hardison, Jr., in his commentary on the *Poetics*, admits the force of arguments against the genuineness of this chapter, but having taken “a conservative approach to the text as it stands”, he assumes that “it is loosely correlated to the other chapters of the *Poetics*” (Leon Golden, *Aristotle's Poetics : A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs (NJ), 1968, p. 173). D.W. Lucas writes : “Most of the nineteenth-century editors took this line [of denying the authenticity of ch. 12], but in the present [twentieth] century there has been a reaction against the often frivolous rejections of earlier scholars, and of recent editors only Butcher and E[ise] do not accept the chapter as genuine” (*Poetics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988, pp. 135-36). Gerald F. Else, in fact, excludes the whole of chapter 12 (except the first clause) as spurious : “Its feeble and repetitive definitions reek of some late *grammatikos*” (*Poetics*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1970, p. 94, n. 85). Lucas feels that “We are ourselves illinformed on the practice of tragedy contemporary with A[r]istotle], as the most recent of extant tragedies are some two generations earlier” (ibid., p. 136).
2. A ‘*kommos*’, Aristotle explains in *Poetics*. 12.2, “is a passage of lament in which both Chorus and actors take part.”
3. Richard C. Jebb in his edition of *King Oedipus (The Oedipus Tyrannus)*, Adolf M. Harkkert-Publisher, Amsterdam, 1966) has provided this convenient analysis (pp. 8-9).
4. *Poetics*. 18.1.
5. cf. *Poetics*, ch. 10. Contrary to common misconception, the coexistence of reversal and discovery is not necessary in case of a complex action; any one would do. Some play like *King Oedipus*, however, have both occurring one after the other.
6. Flashback, a cinematographic jargon, means ‘a break in the narrative that permits the insertion of a scene, episode or even the rest of the film, except for a final return to the “now” of the film’s action; it is told as a chronological backtrack, to childhood, another country, etc.’ Jonathan Green, *Dictionary of Jargon*,

Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & New York, 1987, p. 224. The term has also been used for literature to signify “a narrative technique of interrupting the chronological sequence of a work of dramatic or non-dramatic fiction to interject events of earlier occurrence that bear on the immediate situation.” (*Micropaedia, Encyclopaedia Britannica*, London etc., 1994, p. 819). Some modern narratologists include this technique among what they call anachrony. (See Chris Baldick. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, s.v. See also *analepsis and prolepsis* (ibid)). The technique is, of course, as old as the *Odyssey* in which most of the adventures of Odysseus are told in flashback (Book IX). The first film (or one of the first films) to employ this technique is probably *Variety* (1925) (Silent film directed by D.E.S. Dupont, based on a novel by Frederick Hollander). The word seems to have been coined first in connection with an experiment in Chemistry at the end of the nineteenth century. Even in 1933 the more current meaning of the word as applied to cinema and literature was not in vogue. At least such a meaning is not recorded in the “Supplement” to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933). The 1989 edition of the *OED* records the first occurrence of this word in 1916. Like *cutback*, flashback was also written earlier with a hyphen.

7. What Teiresias says (“King though thou art, the right of reply, at least, must be deemed the same for both; of that I too am lord”) is reminiscent of the law prevalent in Athens (and may be also in other city states) in Sophocles’s own time: only a free born citizen of a *polis* was permitted to defend his own case himself but a mere resident (originally belonging to some other *polis*) could only speak through an advocate. See my “*King Oedipus* : Some Elementary Considerations”, II, *Journal of the Department of English*, University of Calcutta, Vol. 29, Nos. 1-2, 2001-02, pp. 7-15.
8. See Mihaly Brunner, *Oedipus Retried*, Rosenberger & Krausz, London, 2001, p. 102.
9. Laius, it may be mentioned, was cursed by Apollo (or Pelops, the King of Pisa) for a gross breach of the rules of hospitality : Laius carried off the son of Pelops as his catamite (a boy kept for homosexual practices). For different versions of the legend, see Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Vol. I, 1966, p. 257 and Vol. II, 1955, pp. 9-41.
10. Sophocles is mentioned no fewer than eight times in the *Poetics* : 3.2, 4.13, 14.6, 15.7, 16.8, 18.7, 24.10 and 26.5, of which five refer to *King Oedipus* in particular. Besides these Aristotle refers to *King Oedipus* directly ten times : 11.1, 11.2, 13.3, 13.5, 14.1, 14.6, 15.7, 16.8, 24.10 and 26.5 and indirectly once 14.8.
11. See “*Oedipus Through the Ages*”, in op. cit. (n. 7 above), pp. 1-5.

‘Matters Poeticall and Historicall:’ Genre and Politics in Drayton’s *Englands Heroicall Epistles*

SUKANYA DASGUPTA

The Russian formalist critic Victor Shklovsky points out that a work of art is ‘created as a parallel and a contradiction’ to some kind of model that existed before it. Thus ‘a new form appears, not in order to express a new content, but in order to replace an old form which has already lost its artistic value... Form creates content for itself.’¹ Although Shklovsky is dealing with the theory of prose, his notion of ‘form creating content’ is useful in analysing the works of Michael Drayton. For many Renaissance writers, a literary intention was registered primarily in the choice of generic form. While Drayton attempts to follow the Spenserian progress (adapted from Virgil) from the pastoral to the epic, his experiments with different ‘kinds’ of poetry, both conventional and unconventional, indicate his basic reliance on manipulation of genre as a poetic-political strategy. Thus what seems to be ‘form creating content’ ultimately results in ‘content shaping form’. This reshaping of the form is itself a statement, often the most explicit political statement of the poem. A radicalism of purpose is revealed in the way in which Drayton manipulates and adopts generic functions, and ultimately evolves new genres.

The approach to Renaissance generic forms has been greatly influenced by contemporary studies and theories of genre. This shows notably in Rosalie Colie’s emphasis on generic inclusionism and experimentation in Renaissance theory and practice and the elevation of new or subliterate forms into the canon.² The approach is particularly applicable to Drayton, who often elevates forms that are normally considered ‘low’ on the hierarchical scale of genres. For instance, he attaches great significance to the terms ‘legend’, ‘ballad’ and ‘pastoral’ by defining these forms in his prefaces or by combining them with other forms in order to invest them with added significance. As Claudio Guillén suggests, a pre-existent form can never simply be taken over by a writer or transferred to a new work: ‘A genre becomes an invitation to the matching of matter and form’. This matching of matter and form may be illustrated in Drayton’s *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, a complex case of generic mixture, where Drayton offers a poetic validation of English history in a completely new way.³

Although Drayton acknowledges that the literary antecedent of the *Epistles* is Ovid’s *Heroides*, he parenthetically observes, ‘...whose Imitator I partly professe to be’.⁴ Both the *Heroides* and *Englands Heroicall Epistles* are collections of verse epistles: yet they are fundamentally different. Three of Drayton’s many departures from the *Heroides* are especially innovative: he

brings generic variety into the verse epistles, he introduces historical rather than mythological material, and each letter by a woman is matched by one from a man. This in turn radically alters the orientation of the work. The title of Ovid's work indicates that all the letter writers (except one or two cases of doubtful attribution) are women taken from mythology. Drayton may have derived the term 'heroicall' from this source, but he puts it to a completely different use.

The very title of Drayton's poem hints at the generic manipulations that become so evident as the work progresses. The term 'heroicall' has epic implications; the linking up of historical material with heroic poetry confirms the implicit admixture of epic purpose in all of Drayton's poems dealing with English history. As he suggests in the Preface to *Englands Heroicall Epistles*:

The Title (I hope) carrieth Reason in it selfe; for that the most and greatest Persons herein, were English; or else, that their Loves were obtained in England. And though (Heroicall) be properly understood of Demi-gods. ...yet it is also transferred to them, who for the greatnesse of Mind come neere to Gods.⁵

Though traditionally considered to be written in the 'low' style, the epistle is in a way 'raised' by its association with the heroic and historical characters. This may be connected to a more general tendency to mix high and low generic forms, as in the use of pastoral by Spenser and the Spenserians, and in Drayton's own *Poly-Olbion* where there is a quasi-heroical fusion of the mythic and the historical. By applying the Ovidian epistolary form to English historical material and by associating the verse epistle with 'heroic' and historical personalities, Drayton is able to intermingle different traditions and create a new literary kind in England.

The letter was one of the classical genres cultivated during the Renaissance. Claudio Guillén draws attention to what he calls the 'Renaissance awareness of the letter' as a form that presents or declares itself as a piece of writing or correspondence. The primary generic affinity of the letter is not to the verse epistle of Ovid's kind, but the 'familiar letter' as cultivated most famously by Cicero. The writers of most Renaissance poetic epistles follow this model in verse, and Drayton himself writes this kind of epistle to his patrons and friends. Guillén points out that writing a letter is to define and create a 'self', since it is possible to shape a particular image of oneself through a letter.⁶ Through his 'heroicall epistles' Drayton is able to create fictional selves who select and interpret historical events to offer their versions of the past. This interaction and indeed fusion of personal and historical factors is not found in Ovid's *Heroides*.

While the term 'heroicall' suggests a movement towards the epic, the personal tone of the verse epistle allows Drayton to create emotionally active characters. In *A Panoplie of Epistles* (1576), Abraham Fleming had pointed out that letters could incorporate a range of styles: '...wilt thou complaine, wilt

thou accuse, wilt thou rebuke, wilt thou commend, wilt thou threaten, wilt thou pardon.⁷ Many of the epistles in Drayton's work refer to the medium used, the tools of paper and ink required to write these deeply personal and private letters. Yet these are no ordinary epistles, for we are constantly reminded of their epic or 'heroicall' nature, a point not lost on Ben Jonson, who refers to the letters as 'epistolar *Heroick* Songs.'⁸ Although we as readers are aware of the historical importance of the letter writers and the formal existence of a text, that text is, unusually, guised as a personal communication. This allows Drayton to manipulate conventional styles in a variety of ways.

In Ovid's *Heroides* mythological women characters write letters to their lovers lamenting their lost loves. Ovid uses the epistle form as a means to illuminate and define character. The narrative context is rendered irrelevant as each letter focuses on the condition of the heroine's mind: her anger, remorse, anguish and despair. The interest chiefly lies in the subtle variation of tone and mood and the world of concrete events is replaced by a world of psychic projections. Myths and legends are interpreted by different characters according to their narrow self-contained preoccupations. For instance, Cassandra's prophecy of the coming war becomes for Oenone, the lover of Paris, a forecast of not national but her own personal calamity:

That day spoke doom for wretched me,

On that day did the awful storm of changed love begin.⁹

Often cross-references from letter to letter attempt to impose a sense of unity, as in the case of Hermione's letter, which asks to be read in the light of Briseis's. Yet in the final analysis the letters have to be considered independently, because each heroine has to be seen in the light of the myth to which she belongs.

By contrast, Drayton deals with personalities drawn from different ages of English history. In Ovid's work, single epistles illustrate aspects of the female psyche. Drayton's epistles are in pairs, the letters between two lovers constituting a unit. Consequently, while the psychology of the women writers is revealed in their respective letters, it is constantly countered by the male point of view that the paired epistles encapsulate. Drayton explains in the Preface to his work that he has 'interwoven matters Historicall' so that his poems are not considered unduly passionate.¹⁰ Yet this, obviously enough, cannot be the only reason for introducing historical material into a genre that was originally mythological. Drayton clearly had a political purpose behind the inclusion of personalities chosen from English history and their versions of historical events.

That Drayton invited a political and topical reading of his epistles is evident from the design of the entire work. *Englands Heroicall Epistles* was written in 1597 but revised with the incorporation of new sets of epistles in 1598 and 1599. Drayton's political motive is indicated in the 1597 edition itself. Here four sets of epistles refer to the reigns of the deposed kings Edward II,

Richard II and Henry VI. The epistles between Queen Margaret and William de la Poole also portray the characters against the background of a complex struggle for power during the Wars of the Roses. In the last years of Elizabeth's reign, the delicate question arose as to who her successor should be and when Peter Wentworth raised the succession question in 'A Pithie Exhortation to her Majestie for establishing her successor to the crowne' (1593), he was sent to the Tower.¹¹ Francis Osborne points out how Parliament encouraged the Queen to marry, but 'they were so moderate as to passe by all mention of a Successour, ever ungratefull to her eares during the whole Series of her raigne, and not seldome fatall to such as were so hardy as to move it.'¹²

Despite the succession question being delicate and risky, in 1597 Drayton writes a set of epistles between Mary Tudor, Queen of France, and Charles Brandon, whose descendents complicated the Elizabethan succession question. In the last set of epistles, Drayton sympathetically portrays Lady Jane Grey (granddaughter of Mary and Charles Brandon), who had contacts with the Genevan and Calvinist communities, and whose marriage to Guilford Dudley, son of the Duke of Northumberland, signalled the opening moves in a campaign to set aside the established line of succession. She was proclaimed Queen after Edward VI's death, but executed in 1554 after people rose in support of Mary Tudor. Jane Grey's nephew Edward Seymour (son of Catherine Grey) was the Suffolk claimant to the throne during Elizabeth's time. Drayton's sympathetic portrayal of Lady Jane as a Protestant martyr was hardly a politically tactful strategy, given the fact that in 1597 there was a living Suffolk claimant who might well have destabilized and challenged the position of the Queen in her final years. Elizabeth's insecurity regarding the Suffolks is obvious from the fact that throughout her reign she had firmly refused to acknowledge Edward Seymour's legitimacy, claiming that the marriage between his parents Catherine Grey and the Earl of Hertford did not have the sovereign's consent.

If commenting on the succession question was legally prohibited, writing about deposed monarchs was equally hazardous. In the late 1590s the supporters of the Earl of Essex were becoming increasingly critical of Elizabeth's apparent partiality towards the Cecils. The deposition of Richard II was frequently seen as an analogy to the overthrow of the Queen. That Shakespeare's play dealing with the deposition and murder of Richard II was arranged to be performed by Essex's supporters the night before his return to London from Ireland, and the probable use of the deposition scene (never printed during Elizabeth's reign) in Essex's rebellion, have been noted by several critics.¹³ Against this political background, the inclusion of a set of letters between Queen Isabel and Richard II suggests a subversive intention on Drayton's part. In the 1597 edition Richard makes the dangerous admission that his deposition was just punishment for his sins:

Our Empires bounds did never stretch so farre,
So wise in peace, so politique in warre,
Never did all so suddenly decline,
But justice is the heavens, the fault is mine.¹⁴

These, and other politically volatile lines referring to the king as a 'barraine trunke', were deleted in the 1599 and 1600 editions.¹⁵ In 1598 Drayton added two new pairs of epistles: those between Edward the Black Prince and Alice, Countess of Salisbury, and the ones between Elinor Cobham and Duke Humphrey. The latter pair was inserted just before the epistles between Queen Margaret and de la Poole, and offered a new and extended perspective on the Wars of the Roses.

At the same time Drayton also added a single epistle from Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey to Lady Geraldine, its corresponding epistle being included later in the 1599 edition. Surrey's epistle was the only one written that was initially introduced without a corresponding epistle. It did not deal strictly with 'historical' or political matters but with the theme of poetry, in accordance with Surrey's vocation. In 1599, political events may have encouraged Drayton to incorporate the reply from Geraldine. It was in this year that the Earl of Essex returned to England after his abortive Irish campaign. In the annotation to Geraldine's epistle, Drayton states that she was related to the Earl of Essex, since the family of the Fitz-Geralds was originally English. By connecting the patriotic Geraldine with Essex, Drayton is clearly inviting a political interpretation. The case of the Surrey-Geraldine epistles also hints at Drayton's use of gender dialectics to comment on contemporary politics. While Surrey's epistle was introduced and indeed could exist independently in 1598 without inviting any political interpretation, it acquired a political dimension on being paired with Geraldine's in 1599.

Another factor that points to a political reading of the text is Drayton's insistence on a connection between the historical characters and the dedicatees: '...having in some sort, sorted the complexion of the Epistles, to the character of their judgements to whom I dedicate them, excepting only the blamefulness of the person's passion, in those points wherein the passion is blameful.'¹⁶ The epistles between Richard II and Isabel are dedicated to the Earl of Bedford, who participated in the Essex rebellion. Similarly, the epistles between Isabel and Mortimer, set in the reign of a deposed monarch Edward II, are dedicated to Lady Anne Harrington, whose daughter Lucy was the Countess of Bedford. Lady Anne's son John Harrington was a childhood friend of Prince Henry who was seen as the epitome of militant Protestant chivalry.

The first pair of epistles that is susceptible to political interpretation by its use of 'matters historicall' is between Isabel and Mortimer. The reign of Edward II would have relevance for an Elizabethan audience, given the Queen's favours towards the Cecils over the older nobility. Isabel's epistle to Mortimer begins after Mortimer has escaped to France. Outraged by Edward's preference

for male favourites, Isabel scorns his economic mismanagement and his inability to pursue an aggressive foreign policy. Lamenting that the "Princely Jewels" of England are bestowed on minions like Gaveston, she makes a pointed reference to the lands that had been conquered by Longshanks and are now being given away.¹⁷ By contrast, Mortimer is endowed with heroic and patriotic virtues. Drayton stresses many aspects of Mortimer's character that might encourage identification with the Earl of Essex, whose popularity was based on his military prowess and his belief that England should pursue a militant foreign policy. In his letter Mortimer tells Isabel :

And those unchrist'ned Countries call our owne,
Where scarce the Name of *England* hath been knowne.¹⁸

To Essex, Raleigh and others, maritime strength was seen as central to England's power and expansion into new worlds, and also needed to vanquish the forces of Catholic Spain.

By presenting history through the medium of letters, Drayton is able to furnish different points of view regarding the same incidents or situations. In the first two sets of epistles between Henry II and Rosamond, and King John and Matilda, Drayton concentrates on the psychological presentation of character. He himself acknowledges that the epistles between John and Matilda are 'more Poeticall than Historicall.'¹⁹ Using the hyperbolic language of flattery to distort reality, King John interprets Matilda's refuge in a convent as an indication of her devotion to him :

Thou took'st this Vow, to equall my Desire,
Because thou wouldst have me to be a Frier...

John deliberately ignores Matilda's religious sensibility and in her reply she recognizes John's 'flatt'ring Tongue' as distorting the truth :

So from the Rocks, th'alluring Mermaids sing :
In greatest Wants t'inflit the greatest Woe,
Is ev'n the utmost Tyrannie can doe.²⁰

In her letter, Rosamond's overwhelming sense of guilt makes her see herself as a 'Monster both in Bodie and in Mind.' The marks on the paper remind her of 'the blacke sinnes which spot my leprous Soule'; the refusal of the fish in the stream to take the bait she offers becomes to her a symbol of her sin.²¹ In his reply, Henry systematically and cleverly reverses her arguments by asserting that she is like a sheet of white paper on which Gods would write with 'Pens of Angels Wings'; the fish do not respond to her bait because they are amazed at her beauty.²² Here Henry offers a new 'psychological' person-to-person interpretation in place of Rosamond's traditional moralistic viewpoint.

After the first two pairs of letters, the epistles become more 'historical' in nature. Drayton attaches 'notes' to his epistles in order to convey historical facts. The gloss attached to the end of each epistle, rather than the poem itself, is the place for historical precision. While Drayton does deal with historical

characters, he clearly does not expect them to provide historically authentic accounts. He makes no attempt to correct any particular point of view in the epistles themselves. Each epistle with its fragmented version of the past is given validity because it conveys a distinctive and personal point of view. The letter as a form that can influence and shape one's perception of history becomes crucial in this context: a letter can provide historical information, but it is by its very nature a form by which one can shape a 'self'.

Nowhere is the merging of the historical with the personal element more evident than in the two sets of epistles between Elinor Cobham and Duke Humphrey, and between Queen Margaret and William de la Poole. These epistles, focusing directly on the political manipulations that preceded the Wars of the Roses, have to be considered as a single large unit that provides a four-sided perspective on the reign of Henry VI. By suggesting that the mind can shape human experience, Drayton offers several kinds of 'reality' in the epistles. There is an attempt on the part of the characters to fix an identity on the flux of events. In a politically chaotic situation, Duke Humphrey finds comfort in recollecting his military achievements in Agincourt, Cravant and Vernoye. In his epistle to Margaret, Humphrey's enemy Suffolk refers to the very same battles, but uses these references to create a private world that will help him bear his banishment with stoic resignation :

In Heat and Cold all these have I indur'd,
To rowze the French, within their Walls immur'd;
Through all my Life, these Perils have I past,
And now to feare a Banishment at last?²³

Although historically important, for they extend the treatment of the Wars of the Roses, these four epistles, when contrasted with each other, also offer fresh perspectives on the characters of Margaret, Suffolk, Elinor and Humphrey. Preoccupied with charms and spells, Elinor Cobham presents a deranged and frenzied view of the world where her sole intention is to destroy Margaret, her arch rival to the throne :

O, that I were a Witch but for her sake!
Y faith her Queeneship little Rest should take;
I would scratch that Face, which may not feele the Ayre,
And knit whole Ropes of Witch-Knots in her Hayre....

In her epistle to Suffolk, Margaret does not view Elinor as demented or insane but rather as the 'hatefull Duchesse' whose hunger for power is 'such that 'If three Sonnes faile, shee'le make the fourth a King.'²⁴

Drayton uses the device of appended 'notes' to comment ironically on the facts conveyed by the characters. For instance, in his epistle, Suffolk dismisses the charge that he murdered Duke Humphrey. This is corrected in the notes, where we are told that Humphrey was arrested and murdered with the help of the Queen and the Duke of Suffolk. Yet, Drayton provides the 'correct' version of history only in the notes, and allows each epistle a viability.

in its own terms, whether it conveys authentic historical facts or not. By allowing each individual and psychological point of view to stand, was Drayton using the psychological element as a species of critique on social, political and historical matters?

An answer to this may be found in Drayton's use of paired epistles. This is an interesting device by which Drayton is able to contrast male and female states of mind. Although the women, chosen from two hundred years of English history, constitute a diverse group, Drayton unites them in their common desire to concentrate on concrete experience and historical facts. The women deliberately resist flattery, realizing that it opens the way to distortion and semantic manipulation. Matilda's letter lacks John's eloquence but affirms her faith in integrity and chastity. Charles Brandon's epistle is strewn with mythological conceits and allusive symbols: on the day of her Nuptiall Tournament, Mary the French Queen had reminded him of Cynthia the Queen of Light, surrounded by 'shining troupes of Silver-tressed Starres'.²⁵ But Mary remains sceptical of appearances and realizes that the 'too, too Partiall Eye' can deceive:

The precious stone, most beautifull and rare,
When with it selfe we onely it compare,
We deeme all other of that kind to be
As excellent, as that we onely see;
But when we judge of that, with others by,
Too credulous we doe condemne our Eye...²⁶

Similarly when Owen Tudor concludes that the union between him and Queen Katherine is sanctioned by Destiny, Katherine immediately rejects the imposition of chance by asserting her freedom of choice: 'So I (a Queene) be soveraigne in my choyse.'²⁷

The men, on the other hand, seek to control the flux of events through language. The male suitors use elaborate rhetoric and self deception and often view the women as objects of their desire, as in the case of Henry II, King John, The Black Prince, and Edward IV. This kind of gender confrontation provides a parallel to the encounter of the sexes on the historical or political plane, where the women are often victimized. Rosamond has to be confined in a labyrinth away from Henry II's jealous Queen, for she has no status in Henry's family or in society. Matilda flees to a nunnery only to be pursued by King John, while Edward IV clearly views Mistress Shore as a material possession by comparing her beauty to rubies, pearls and diamonds. In their historical encounters with these kings, Matilda, Rosamond, and Jane Shore all become victims of 'a Monarchs high desire';²⁸ they attempt to counter the Petrarchan and Ovidian rhetoric of their suitors with scepticism of appearances, plainness of speech and rejection of flattery.

The greater involvement of the men in the realm of public affairs acts as a contrastive factor. The men constantly refer to their heroic deeds, their

military achievements or their noble lineage, and clearly view themselves as public figures even when expressing private emotions. Edward the Black Prince asks the Countess of Salisbury not to disdain or reject his love because he anticipates that his 'Brow a Crowne hereafter may adorne'. Owen Tudor points out to Queen Katharine that in Wales the 'learned *Bards* doe sing my pedigree'; Henry Howard recounts to Geraldine his travels through Europe and his meetings with 'divine ERASMUS' and the 'learn'd AGRIPPA'.²⁹ This public, orthodox stance in the letters written by the men may be contrasted with the subversive, deconstructive and private stance adopted by the women writers. Drayton offers an authorial critique of this stereotypical opposition through the device of paired epistles. The letters written by the women reflect a deeper interest in the realistic and psychological study of character, made possible by the more private stance they adopt. The women are also brought into the foreground by presenting a critique of the male point of view. In his epistle to Alice, Countess of Salisbury, Edward the Black Prince uses the blazon³⁰ to describe Alice's beauty, but also views her as his potential possession :

Thy Cheeke, for which mine all this Penance proves,
 Steales the pure whiteness both from Swans and Doves:
 Thy Breath, for which, mine still in Sighes consumes,
 Hath rob'd all Flowers, all Odours, and Perfumes.

In her answer to his letter, Alice rejects this hyperbolic and public stance when she asserts :

Let JOHN and HENRY, EDWARDS instance be,
 MATILDA and faire ROSAMOND for me...³¹

Here Alice clearly segregates the women from the men, suggesting that they have very different perspectives. The more private and subversive stand that she takes is evident when she ironically highlights the dilemma of women who are expected to conform to the desires of men and society:

"To Men is graunted priviledge to tempt,
 "But in that Charter, Women be exempt:
 "Men win us not, except we give consent,
 "Against our selves unlesse that we be bent.
 "Who doth impute it as a Fault to you?
 "You prove not false, except we be untrue;
 "It is your Vertue, being Men, to trie,
 "And it is ours, by Vertue to denie."³²

The women letter writers, unlike the men, consciously reject their public images, opting for more private ones. In Jane Shore's epistle she wishes that she could lead a humble shepherd's life, away from the public gaze where she is Subject to all Tongues, object to all Eyes.' To Lady Jane Grey, monarchy and fame have no attraction, for

where the Arme is stretch'd to reach a Crowne,
"Friendship is broke, the dearest things throwne downe..³³

Fame, power, ambition and public recognition, all so important to the men, are repudiated or disdained by the women. 'True Love is simple,' asserts Rosamond to Henry, while Geraldine recognises Surrey's public status as a poet, but adds 'Its you alone, who are the cause I love'.

Thus in *Englands Heroicall Epistles* Drayton opens up a private personal perspective, particularly a feminine perspective, but he also goes beyond that by creating pairs of letters. The gender dialectics that this device of 'pairing' generates, become in turn a reflection of the historical dialectics that form the basis of the epistles. The women, through their interpretations of 'history', offer a different perspective and often a critique of the kind of 'history' presented by the men.

While discussing the "single line of dialogue", Mikhail Bakhtin writes:

In such a line, every utterance, while focussed on its referential object, at the same time displays an intensive reaction to another utterance, either replying to it or anticipating it. This feature of reply and anticipation penetrates deeply into the intensively dialogic utterance.

He further adds that such an utterance appears to be taking in the intentions of the speaker and 'reworking' them.³⁴ Although here Bakhtin is not referring to the epistolary method, his definition may be profitably applied to the relational character of the epistolary form. The unit in *Englands Heroicall Epistles* is not the dramatic monologue incorporated in a single letter, but a letter together with its reply. Each unit provides two versions of history, one from a male and the other from a female point of view. This dialogism implies a "third-person" analysis by the writer which combines with individual psychological introspection on the parts of the characters.

It is precisely this merging of historical and personal elements that marks Drayton's most innovative departure from Ovid's *Heroides*. The first two sets of epistles contain 'no particular points of historie', but emphasize the amatory aspect. The psychological and personal treatment of character predominates in these letters. Drayton had already shown an interest in the psychological presentation of character in his 'complaint' poems, later revised as 'legends'. Yet there is a crucial difference between the presentation of character in the complaint poems and in the *Epistles*. The moral and political exemplum that dominates the complaints and is sustained in the legends, is absent in the *Epistles*, which reflects a deeper interest in the realistic or psychological study of character as a factor in the historical process. Here Drayton does not merely move from the historical to the personal, but rather gives history a human angle by viewing the historical *through* the personal, i.e. in terms of its impact on

the lives and personalities of individual historical characters. At the same time, the paired epistles suggest that he views historical problems as reflecting more general human problems — for instance, gender encounters. Thus *Englands Heroicall Epistles* provides a unique example of Drayton's generic manipulation that has political implications as well.

Endnotes :

All references to Drayton's works are to the standard edition. *The Works of Michael Drayton*, edited by J.W. Hebel with Kathleen Tillotson and Bernard Newdigate, 5 Volumes (Oxford : Basil Blackwell for the Shakespeare Head Press, 1931-1941); corrected edition (Oxford : Basil Blackwell and Mott Ltd., 1961).

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17. ll. 81-86, p. 162.
18. ll. 81-82, p. 170.
19. p. 192.
20. ll. 95-96, p. 149, ll. 108-110, p. 155.
21. l. 174, p. 137, ll. 17-18, p. 133, ll. 120-122, p. 136.
22. l. 25-28, p. 140, ll. 149-152, p. 144.
23. ll. 69-70, p. 225, 69-72, p. 232.
24. ll. 107-110, p. 218, ll. 57-62, p. 240.
25. ll. 129-136, p. 273.
26. ll. 159-164, p. 265.
27. l. 145, p. 205.
28. l. 5, p. 247.
29. l. 182, p. 180, 176, p. 210, l. 47-60, pp. 278-279.
30. For a discussion of the extended use of the encomium and blazon in the *Epistles*, see Katherine Carter, 'Drayton's Craftsmanship : The Encomium and the Blazon in Englands Heroicall Epistles', *HLQ* Vol. 38. No. 4, August 1975, pp. 297-314.
31. ll. 135-138, p. 179, ll. 49-50, p. 183.
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34. Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse Typology in Prose' from *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. See *Readings in Russian Poetics : Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. L. Matejka and K. Pomorska, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1971. p. 189.

Henry Salt's Concept of Humanitarianism

BRATATI SENGUPTA

"When the rationalists rejected revelation and put their trust in an absentee God who wound up the universe and left it going, they had to find a new basis for morality. Jehovah's thunderings and special dispensations concerned the eighteenth-century wits very little and the revelations of Sinai became, after all, a little too bizarre for them to accept. One needed no canon of miracles to prove a first cause or a designer or purpose behind the world... Never had a period been so obsessed with morality as the eighteenth century. Titles which today repel were to the rationalist an irresistible challenge to a new struggle over the problem of conduct. Shaftesbury labelled one essay *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit*, Adam Smith wrote his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, John Balguy entitled his investigations of the same subject *The Foundation of Moral Goodness*."¹

This is what Dix Harwood had to say in his *Love for Animals* about the condition of morality in the eighteenth century. The book is a treatise on the concept of morality and Harwood traces the way in which the sentiment saw rapid face-lifts till it came to rest on the relationship between man and animals. He saw that man's duty to his neighbour divided the moralists into two groups – the intellectualists who believed that morality arose from reason, and the sentimentalists who believed that morality stems from feelings. Ever since empiricism was taken note of by man, reason and emotions have always stood at loggerheads. However in the eighteenth century, there was a deviation – both the groups realized that "the likeness between man and beasts is even closer than a mere physical resemblance. If morality imposes duties on us and obligations to mankind, then how about duties and obligations to the animal kind? It became a moral question."² Soon a fraction of England's population came forward asking "what in the very nature of society animals might insist on as their rights, provided they were articulated enough to make the demand."³ This attitude developed as more and more people doubted the concept of the universe being a man's world. With so much infiltration of new thoughts and questions which had never before been raised, the enthusiasm grew. One question led to another and the generation stood before a vital query: was man usurping this universe? The natural order had placed an entire hierarchy of organisms on the substratum, but was man disobeying the natural order? A zoophilist's utopia would call for a symbiotic atmosphere in the world. It would be utopian because the symbiosis would get rid of hostility and peace would be restored. However when Darwin's survival of the fittest proved true, the difference between man and animals became more glaring. Harwood says that here Theodore Roosevelt's theory works out fine in support of man – "What a superior people wants and can develop, it may rightfully take."⁴

Such contradictory ways of thought gave way to mutually contradictory behaviours and opinions in the age. On the one hand there were the theologians and philanthropists who were propounding a philosophy of love and goodness to all. Rousseau's *The Social Contract* celebrated liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Though it was absurd to expect nobility for animals in an age which hardly gave its men their due rights, the question of showing humanity to sentient beings did come up. In 1772 the question was raised in church and there was the instantaneous conclusion that an upright man has regard for beasts too. "Man has no right whatever to inflict useless pain on God's creatures; and the preacher added significantly that there might be worse consequences than we can well imagine for the needless killing of an insect. Man says to the angel, "Thou art my brother." Then snob though he is, he *must* say to the worm, "Thou art my sister"; for he is bound to both by ties of resemblance and sympathy."⁵ The Reverend Humphrey Primatt went so far as to say that because it is true that beasts do not go to heaven, it is our responsibility to take care of them.⁶ Alongside this upsurge of sentiments for animals, there was an increase in cruelty to animals because of a renewed interest in animal sports. It is ironical that a love for animals made these beasts so close to the human family that they became a source of entertainment for man and the result naturally followed that these entertainments often ended up as bloody deeds of animal torture. There were games like bull-baiting, bear-baiting, hare-hunting, deer-stalking, pheasant-shooting, fox-hunting and others.

When such was the scenario in England in the nineteenth century, Henry Stephen Salt came to the forefront. That particular age was of a long struggle between man and nature, a struggle that shook the entire world. The major preoccupations, as a result, were naturally social forces, ethics and humanist values. On the one hand there were Jeremy Bentham and James Mill crying themselves hoarse about utilitarian values and Carlyle with his chartist philosophies, while on the other hand there were the Victorian writers constantly feeding the generation with optimism and vigour, in order to renew lost ideals. Who had the occasion to look beyond the human boundaries to recognize the plight of animals? On the contrary the rising frustrations among the people led them to derive pleasure not from each other's company, but from animals, with the result that the pleasure in most cases turned sadistic. It will not be an exaggeration to say that there was a vile pleasure in seeing personal sorrows externalized as physical trauma in animals. In literature animals served as imagery, almost as a prosopopoeic feature. Ironically, "man partook of animal nature, but he was, as Hamlet said, the "paragon of animals", the connecting link between angels and animals, the center and purpose of physical creation. Beasts existed only to serve his needs."⁷

Salt's credit lies in the fact that he remained faithful to the dominant value of his age – humanism, and yet he did not restrict himself to a particular section. He looked beyond and over human society and gave new dimensions to the

word "kin". It was now used to refer to our 'co-brethren' occupied by the world of animals. He made an anthology of animal poems and called it *Kith and Kin*. The preface to this anthology begins with the lines :

"We and the beasts are kin. Man has nothing that the animals have not at least a vestige of; the animals have nothing that man does not in some degree share. Since, then, the animals are creatures with wants and feelings differing from our own, they surely have their rights."

Salt published one paper after another in order to raise his voice. The important ones are *The Company I Have Kept*, *Seventy years among Savages*, *Sportsman's Fallacies* and others. Finally he founded the 'Humanitarian League' in 1891 with other eminent activists like Edward Maitland , Howard Williams and Kenneth Romanes. The principal objective of this league was to liberate both man and animals from cruelty and injustice :

"For five years the League has been advocating, in season and out of season, the humanitarian principle that 'it is iniquitous to inflict suffering, directly or indirectly, on any sentient being, except when self-defence or absolute necessity can be justly pleaded,' and has been protesting, in the words of its Manifesto, 'not only against the cruelties inflicted by men on men,... [but] against the wanton ill-treatment of the lower animals.'⁸"

Salt's essay titled *Humanitarianism* was written in the interests of the Humanitarian League. Giving a full explanation of the import of the term 'humanitarianism', Salt says that it is derived from the word 'humanity' which is like an umbrella term that encompasses under itself all aspects of feelings and sentiments that are specific to man. "The connection between *human* and *humane* is, indeed, of deep and natural significance, humaneness being felt to be essentially a property of human kind; but here the scholar steps in, and, claiming for himself the title of humanist, would see in the "Humanities", as he calls them, nothing more than the study of polite literature; while the theologian, on his part, would interpret "humanitarian" as one who denies the divinity of Christ."⁹ For Salt the meaning of "humanitarianism" was thus "nothing more and nothing less than the study and practice of humane principles – of compassion, love, gentleness, and universal benevolence." The term "universal" for Salt was not limited to the human kind only, as said earlier. He further explained that humanitarianism unlike other "isms" was not a code of moral conduct. Rather, it was an intuitive appeal to consciousness. Salt's idea of humanitarianism was different from the humanitarianism of other utilitarian thinkers like Jeremy Bentham. For the latter cruelty to animals was wrong because it enhanced their pain, but for Salt, cruelty to animals was cruelty to our own kind. It mattered little whether the compassion was of a selfish nature or of a benevolent one. The concept of selfish compassion cited by Hobbes refers to the fear that we have of ourselves being in a similar kind of pain. Benevolent compassion, according to Wollaston is a result of one of our many faculties because of which we shudder at the sight of suffering of

any kind.¹⁰ This brings Salt to a further revelation that alongside compassion, cruelty is another of our human faculties, both being antagonistic to each other. If civilization is formed by the survival of the fittest and the extinction of the weak, then our civilization should be ideally formed by the extinction of cruelty and the growth of goodness. The choice of cruelty as the weaker faculty is because civilization has to be structured on strong lines. Darwin's idea of survival of the fittest is not in any way a right granted on the human race to go ahead and do anything they please with the world of sentient beings. Professor Kropotkin says that Darwin only proved that there is a struggle for existence in order to put a check on the inordinate increase of species. As a result, "it is not the strong but the co-operative species that endure."¹¹ Moreover, the human race is a progressive one which instinctively strives towards creative evolution.

"Closely allied with this compassion is the kindred sense of justice."¹² This brings us to the object of humanitarianism. Compassion and justice together aim at preventing cruelty and wrong towards all beings. Salt said that "much of our so-called 'charity' and 'philanthropy' is purely sentimental, succeeding only in diverting interest and enthusiasm from those enterprises in which some thoroughly human purpose is at stake. It is only by the adoption of some broad and rational principle that the energy at present absorbed into this partial and short-sighted philanthropy can be reclaimed and turned to good account in the service of humanitarianism."¹³ This is also to say that a lack of humanitarianism produces an indifference to humanity. Salt's deep understanding of humanity led him to the realization that cruelty was not of one kind only. In this respect he cited Hogarth's *Four Stages of Cruelty* where the villain Tom Nero first tortures a dog, then as a charioteer mistreats his horse, as a lover murders his beloved and finally dissects the body of a hanged criminal. Though Salt agrees that cruelty exists because of the inability to place oneself in the victim's shoes, he agrees with Lecky that the same man may be both kind and cruel at the same time without conscious self-contradiction.¹⁴ Thus goes Leigh Hunt's comment : "There are unquestionably many amiable men among sportsmen, who as the phrase is, would not 'hurt a fly' – that is to say, on a window; at the end of a string the case is altered."¹⁵ Thus a one-sided humanitarianism retards the progress of a rational philosophy of compassion. Salt feels that it is futile to save life with one hand and take it with another. Our sentimentalism comes into play only when we walk in the open and show love for the beasts and birds in meadow and woodland and finally come back home to express our liking for the animals that appear at our dinner tables. Against all these things and more Salt rose up and spread his word of humanitarianism.¹⁶

Salt derived this awareness of sentient beings from ancient sources both political and religious. He found that while the Romans believed in a virulent way of life with their gladiatorial games, the Greeks felt an instinctive

repugnance to cruelty, bloodshed and tyranny. Moreover the Greek concept of gentleness was more aesthetic than moral. The Christian religion was a new movement in the ethics of humanity. The new status given to human life and love automatically spread the message of universal brotherhood. Then there was Buddhism which was the first movement of its kind to propound love and compassion towards all. "He who is humane does not kill", such was the Buddhist canon. Salt himself was a follower of Pythagoras whose injunction ran as "not to kill or injure any innocent animal" along with its doctrine of metempsychosis.¹⁷

Salt's creed of equality with beasts can be best explained by Kahlil Gibran's words to sentient beings :

'By the same power that slays you, I too am slain; and I too shall be consumed...

Your blood and my blood is naught but the sap that feeds the tree of heaven.'

Notes and References :

1. Dix Harwood, *Love for Animals* (New York : Columbia University, 1982) 160.
2. *ibid.*, 161.
3. *ibid.*, 161.
4. *ibid.*, 162 (this is in keeping with the view that man harnesses animals for his work and also gives it food, shelter and security).
5. *ibid.*, 165.
6. *ibid.*, 166.
7. James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast* (Baltimore : John Hopkins University Press, 1980)2.
8. Henry S. Salt, *The New Charter* (London : George Bell and sons, 1896) viii.
9. Henry S. Salt, *Humanitarianism* (London : The Humanitarian League Publications, 1891) 3 (The idea of humanism was seeing several changes. Salt gave the name humanitarianism, meaning going beyond humanity.)
10. *ibid.*, 4.
11. Henry S. Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism : Essays and Dialogues* (London : London Vegetarian Society, 1980) 10.
12. Henry S. Salt, *Humanitarianism* (London : The Humanitarian League Publications, 1891) 15.
13. *ibid.*, 18.

The 'Second Impersonality' of T. S. Eliot : A Quest

INDRANI CHOUDHURI DUTT

The early poetry of T.S. Eliot contained in "Prufrock and Other Observations" is often simplistically seen as the authentic counter of his critical assertions proclaimed in *The Sacred Wood*. That is to say, they are presumed to be embodiments of "impersonal" objective perception, rendered in terms of the famous clinical correlatives for which Eliot is often the only point of reference. While it is true that this early poetry owes part of its identity to the polemics of youthful creativity, directed against the sentimental, reductive tendencies of Georgian poetry, yet to consider its content as useful material for evolving a learned poetic discourse, is to grossly underestimate the essential nature of Eliotian "impersonality".

The publicized assertion in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" on personal creation if read in the context of the entirety of Eliot's literary criticism, reveals its true colours. There Eliot said, "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But of course, only those who have personality and emotion know what it means to want to escape from these things".¹ The contradictions of the aesthetic character pronounced as a willingness to escape only upon experiencing on a personal level, is in truth an Empsonian ambiguity. If read in conjunction with the essay on Yeats the scope of the comment becomes clear; Eliot says in the later essay "The second impersonality is that of the poet, who out of intense and personal experience is able to express a general truth retaining all the particularity of his experience, to make of it a general symbol".²

The second "impersonality is then an ability to envision without losing contact with the referential base; it is therefore, as Herbert Read, Frank Kermode, Graham Hough, G.S. Fraser, C.K. Stead, and Prof. Arup Rudra have shown in their expositions, not alien to Romantic aesthetics.³ The distinction lies in the modern vision's determination to see felt emotion as a complex phenomenon, a tension between subjective experiencing and objective appraisal, and not as unified perception. There is behind the shift in emphasis the evolving philosophy of the occident, with modified monism relenting to pluralistic perception, which has been the focal point of a segment of Eliot scholarship.

The contention of the present essay is that commitment to this "second impersonality", and to the emotional polarity of the rich tension need not be ascertained from *The Waste Land* and after – as Prof. Rudra prefers to show. The early poetry is poised enough to give the 1925 poem serious competition.

II

The early poetry does not reveal its vitality only as companion pieces to the later poems. Though an inclusive reading is a preferred course, yet, contrary to conventional critical belief, reader response and teacher response, the emotional intensity of these poems is responsible for selecting the correlatives, in as much as the correlatives – the instruments of aesthetic discipline – are responsible for containing it. The young Eliot in creation is in a trance, in a state of “escape” where he participates in the feeling. The dapper young, socially privileged scholar of Harvard, the shy young American visitor in the families of the English avant gardé was simply not an exhibitionist, but a keenly alive individual captured in his vitality in the early lines published in 1917. The passion of emotive content demanded the shock inherent in the Empsonian ambiguity of the early criticism.

The poetic emotion is indicative of an involvement that tempts us to see in Eliot, the creator, reflection of the charmed frenzied figure caught in the cosmic dance in Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan”. In a recently published review of “Inventions of the March Hare : ‘Poems’” Prof. Chinmoy Guha underlines the burning sensuality evident in Eliot’s “Juvenalia” and suggests that sensual reticence detected in conventional Eliot criticism becomes unsettled when confronted with the blatant earthiness of these re-discovered poems.⁴ The review partially supports the contention that Eliot’s early poetry is equally committed to being responsive to felt emotion and to the fashioning of a carefully sculpted poetic idiom, sourced from wide ranging erudition and scholarship. But the depth and expanse of the Eliotian sensibility confront and embrace the truths of the living experience with such intimate honesty that to accord to sensuality the status of the ultimate proof of emotional commitment, is to tell the story somewhat naively.

The “escape” or act of distilling life emotion is an act of control engaged in sharpening and focussing the sensibility without disproportionately refining it. It is a persistent effort, embedded in the very nature of the sensibility to realize the concealed contours of the felt emotion. It is an inclination, not a cultivated, clinical detachment ready with its armoury of scholarly material like French aesthetics, from which to select with the skill of an artisan and complete a jigsaw puzzle. What occurs is an incessant interaction between the man and the poet, where human frailty and vulnerability play a role, at once *determinative* and obedient vis a vis the poetic sensibility. The argument corollary to such creative experience would indeed assert that unless one had personality and emotion, “escape”, of which poetry is made, would be impossible.

III

In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" Eliot writes

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each
I do not think that they will sing to me.⁵

The two spaced out, simply constructed lines stand in splendid isolation dominated by the image of the mermaids, surrounded by a gamut of images emphasizing urban depravity and squalor, the mermaid – picture radiates a refreshing but transcendental glow. As we have been informed by the painstaking scholarship of Dr. Manju Jain, among others, Eliot is possibly indebted to John Donne and Gerard de Nerval's "El Desdichado" for the image.⁶ However the question we should be asking ourselves is not where "mermaids" came from, but what brought it as an image. Eliot has reminded us "that a critic must have a very highly developed sense of fact" and since it is "by no means a trifling or frequent gift" and is "very slow to develop",⁷ those critics who are artists have a greater chance to acquire them. The critical self of an artist is posterior to the creative self and its development depends upon a transmission of the cognitive capacity of the anterior self which is, obviously, residual in character. If the derivative self can acquire a rich sense of fact, then the original sensibility is per se enriched with a unique response. It is sustained by a realisation of the hidden nuances of experienced feeling. The genesis of "mermaids" resides in this sense of fact, in the "escape". The source is not the determinant, and its understanding is irrevocably linked with the nature of the "second impersonality". As the man suffers, the poet objectifies the suffering, but in the process he retains his contact with the suffering self, with its "trouvaille", its raw feeling. Eliot feels the contagious insensitivity of a society which has allowed the hard matter-of-factness of materialism to seep into its consciousness. It entraps and cripples the few sensitive souls. This is what determines the correlative of the mermaid with its sense of lost promise and fantasy.

The third Prelude in the collection of four poems offers another example of the strength of Eliot's commitment to felt emotion. The dominant figure is of course the prostitute whose presentation leads Dr. Jain to refrain from source-determination of an academic kind and admit,

"The reader is not given an objective rendering of perceptions however. The images are attributed to her consciousness by the controlling voice of the poem".⁸

In the seedy, derelict brothel tucked away in a Parisian neighbourhood she comes into consciousness with the memories of physical trafficking alive in her mind. She neither suffers from remorse, nor is she unaware that her depravity is an extension of the decadence of the conventional, socially acceptable crowd now engaged in unobjectionable activity outside her window. As in "The Love Song...", so in this poem, the connection between immediate

experience and universal truth selects the images of light and darkness; the night world of carnivorous exploitation of one human being by others is, as it were, amateurishly, garishly painted over by a day-world. From beneath the facade, the skeletons of depravity peer out, Eliot writes

“you had such a vision of the street
As the street hardly understands.”⁹

There is little scope here for formalized annotations and the reference to Charles Louis Phillipe and Baudelaire are, at best, helpful appendages.

IV

When discussing the writings of Pascal Eliot remarked “Pascal was not a mystic...but what can only be called mystical experiences happen to many men, who do not become mystic... but he to whom this happens assuredly has the sensation of being a vehicle rather than a maker...you may call it communion with the Divine, or you may call it a temporary crystallization of the mind. Unless science can teach us to reproduce such phenomenon at will science cannot claim to have explained them”.¹⁰

There is little doubt that in 1931 Eliot was documenting in prose what Coleridge visualised in poetry, probably as a result of partaking of narcotics for medicinal purpose, in “Kubla Khan”. In those timeless lines we have the unforgettable image of what Eliot concedes could be “communion with the Divine”—

“And all should cry, ‘Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair;
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of Paradise”

This is an affirmation that the creative act is one of absorption before it is one of making. In Coleridge’s poem this sense of intimate and honest saturation in feeling is, however, more a transcendental experience than it is in Eliot’s enunciation of the “second impersonality”. There is an obvious relation between the two poets in so far as commitment to distillation is concerned. But in the younger poet the necessity of being committed to the raw feeling of immediate experience is stronger as the comments in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” and “Yeats” reveal. It is a conviction more emphatically located in Wordsworth’s poetry as for instance in the familiar “Lines : Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey”. The Romantic pioneer writes

“Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; *of all the mighty world*
of eye, an ear.”¹²

This world quickens an awareness of “the still, sad music of humanity”. The “second impersonality” is, then, a rich compound, incorporating in it a sense of the wholeness of feeling - embracing the “trouvaille” and its distilled form. Far from being alien to Romantic aesthetic it takes its fruits further, and establishes the vision of early Modernism. The “mermaids” of Prufrock and the chiaroscuro of the prostitute’s dwelling are embodiments of the wholeness of feeling. There is evidence in the “second impersonality” that “....the past (is) altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past”.¹³ And its quest is therefore infinitely rich and rewarding.

Notes And References :

1. “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, *The Sacred Wood*, (Methuen & co. Ltd., 1920 published in India by, B.J. Publications, 1976), p. 58.
2. *On Poetry and Poets*, (Faber and Faber, London, 1957), p. 255.
3. Cf. *Modernism's Romantic Journey*, (Sarat Book House, Calcutta), pgs. 1-8.
4. Cf. “Kabar Khonra Kabita”, *Desh*, Vol. of 2nd February 2005, (ABP, Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta), pgs. 128-133.
5. T.S. Eliot, *Selected Poems*, (Faber and Faber, London, Boston, 1954). p. 16.
6. Cf. T.S. Eliot : *Selected poems and A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot*, (O.U.P., New Delhi), p. 53.
7. “The Function of Criticism”, *Selected Essays*, (Faber and Faber, London, 1957). p. 31.
8. T.S. Eliot : *Selected Poems and A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot*, p. 65.
9. T.S. Eliot, *Selected Poems*, p. 23.
10. “The ‘Pensées’ of Pascal”, *Selected Essays*, p. 405.
11. S.T. Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*, *Six Ages of English Poetry* ed. H. Williams, (Blackie and Son, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, New Delhi 1963), p. 128.
12. *Six Ages of English Poetry*, p. 114.
13. *The Sacred Wood*. p. 50.

Miss Marple : A Version of Christie's Justice

PURNIMA MUKHERJEE

What leaf fring'd legend haunts about thy shape?

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

— Keats, *Ode On a Grecian Urn*

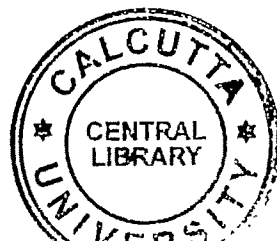
The Grecian Urn does “tease us out of thought” with unanswered questions. So does crime fiction. For the soul of a detective fiction rests on the puzzle and the mystery it evokes. Baffling is the art of the detective writers. Harold Bloom writes that Dr. Sheppard in *Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is, of all her murderers, Agatha Christie’s ‘true surrogate’.¹ In fact, it is easy to agree with Bloom that ‘Her largest power is whole heartedness as a plotter’.² But there can be no answer to the question as to why a writer takes to detective writing. Is it that detective novels bring in an assurance of stability after much threat to security?

The centre of interest in detective stories is not supplied by the crime itself but by the investigation that unravels the puzzle. This phenomenon of investigation obviously calls forth a central figure, the sleuth, ‘who identifies motive, assesses probable cause, and sifts through a mass of information.’³

It has been observed that a novelist sometimes falls in love with his/her own creation — a particular character whom he/she identifies as his/her own. In Christie’s case it happens with Miss Marple, an aged spinster, sedentary but mentally very alert. It is true that both Poirot and Miss Marple, Christie’s famous detectives, apply reason and imagination in their investigations. But Miss Marple’s imagination has a moral aura.

Poirot in the line of Holmes focuses more on legal justice which is again connected with social harmony; for justice is meted out to ensure social equilibrium. The Marple novels set out to say something new. It is no more the question of legal justice; it is moral justice which is more significant. The act of cleansing should come from within. The idea of justice therefore follows a very strange course in the Marple novels.

Miss Marple’s idea of justice is subtly interrelated with the problem of evil in these novels. In *Nemesis* there is the near evocation of the word in the Greek manner and Miss Marple becomes ‘Nemesis’ herself for the murderer, Christie, like Coleridge, makes the phenomenon of evil interesting by giving it a natural cover. Miss Marple observes with an eye on *Macbeth*, “If I were ever producing the splendid play, I would make the three witches quite different. I would have them three ordinary, normal women...” They would look at each other slyly and you would feel a sort of menace just behind the ordinariness of them.⁴



The most interesting point about Miss Marple is that she dislikes calling herself a sleuth and a judge of people. When her friend Mrs. Bantry remarks, in *The Mirror Cracked from Side to Side*. "Jane, why don't you come out boldly and call yourself a criminologist and have done with it?"⁵ Miss Marple answers in her characteristic spirit: "It is simply that I have a certain knowledge of human nature – that is only natural after having lived in a small village all my life."⁶ She speaks of herself that her mind constantly works through likes and associations; that certain people reminded her of certain other people and on the basis of this she pre-supposes how they act. Thus her strange principle of investigation is rather based on her creation of ancestral links; for her the traits of human behaviour pattern have a definite ancestral history. The distinctive point in Miss Marple's investigation is that it is not the case but the truth behind it that attracts her attention. In *A Pocket Full of Rye*, Miss Marple is never confused by the rhyme pattern used by the murderer. It is clear to her that Lancelot, the murderer, has followed the rhyme only to make someone else a scapegoat.

Christie successfully creates an aura of truth and this makes Miss Marple so different from other sleuths like Peter Wimsey, Albert Campion, Roderik Alleyn and others. This aura is a sort of vision for her. She develops from within an intuitive eye for evil. This evil, Miss Marple believes, has an immaterial existence and this, again, builds up an atmosphere of evil in her books. Furthermore, this immaterial evil takes a material shape in particular characters in the crime fiction. They are not necessarily only the criminals; sometimes they turn out to be a character like the innocent Mrs. Badcock in *The Mirror Cracked from Side to Side* where she unconsciously harms others. This evil has a deep rooted presence in our world and the root can never be eradicated, though solutions are suggested or reached temporarily. Miss Marple's finding of truth is only a temporary thrust into this deep rooted evil.

The question of justice, therefore, is associated with the idea of evil in the Marple stories. And this evil-justice equation gives an uneasy depth to St. Mary Mead. The apparent simplicity of the village landscape lends the underlying evil an innocent face. Lymstock, in *The Moving Finger*, is an extension of St. Mary Mead in its calm and serenity; the peaceful atmosphere of *At Bertram's Hotel* almost negates the disquieting evil. So, "Mayhem Parve" has become a generic name for the serene village milieu where Agatha Christie sets most of her Marple stories. Robert Barnard observes : "Mayhem Parva is a microcosm of the big world, and subject to the same disruptions and disturbances."⁷ St. Mary Mead becomes a mini edition of a bigger world of crime and Miss Marple herself becomes 'Nemesis' in carrying out the evil-justice conflict. One seems to hear Mr. Rafiel's words to Miss Marple in *Nemesis*. "You dear, if I may call you that, have a natural flair for justice, and that has led to you having a natural flair for crime..."

*Let justice roll down like waters,
And righteousness like an everlasting stream.*⁸

Miss Marple is always interested in human nature and from this she gathers that 'there's a lot of wickedness in the world'.⁹ For her every bit of information is important; she does not discriminate. Rumours, ordinary village title-tattle, the gossip of the village ladies or the maids — all have equal importance to her. In *Murder of the Vicarage* when Colonel Malchett calls her 'preposterous' or 'the wizened up old maid',¹⁰ the Vicar reacts mildly in words that help us understand the wit and strength behind Miss Marple's investigation : "Miss Marple knew next to nothing of life with a capital L, she knew practically everything that went on in St. Mary Mead."¹¹

The St. Mary Mead experiences add sharpness and direction to Miss Marple's detective acumen. She lends an attentive ear to an old lady Mrs McGillicuddy who saw something unusual in a passing train. It is only Miss Marple who smells crime and finds that there is truth in Mrs McGillicuddy's statement. And with this clear objective eye Miss Marple, at a ripe old age, appoints Lucy Eylesbarrow to help her in the case for she has lost her physical mobility.

Lucy Eylesbarrow adds a new perspective — a broad spectrum — to Christie's crime fiction. She seems to be a rebuttal of the charge that Christie's characters lack psychological depth. Miss Marple keeps herself off the stage and Lucy Eylesbarrow, in her new surroundings, begins to develop. Through a judicious mix of sociability, suspense and sombre suggestions this crime story comes to acquire a sprawling structure and veers round the psychological realism of a novel. An interesting point, in this connection, becomes evident: Miss Marple even allows her criminals to suffer remorse in their own style. Here Christie focuses on psychology and shows how a character turned criminal may suffer in the process. Marina Gregg's death in the *Mirror Cracked from Side to Side* is something of a grace and that is the only way of escape from suffering as Miss Marple observes. In *Nemesis* again Clotilde's suicide terminates her suffering.

Poirot, as Robert Barnard observes "exists only in the present, he has function rather than character"¹² Miss Marple, on the other hand evolves herself into a social dimension : she in her singleness, is more amiable and sociable than Poirot. The old lady, therefore, gives an added meaning to Christie's evil-justice perspective : the role of retribution assumes a significant threat.

Miss Marple always believes in the worst of human nature and she feels that wickedness should always be punished. She is sometimes emotional when she feels for the innocents, be it the victim or the murderer's close relatives. In *A Pocket Full of Rye*, she felt for Patricia, the murderer's wife; in *The Body in the Library* she was moved by the murder of the young girls. Ruby Keene and Pamela Reeves. But in her passion for righteousness she never compromised with the evil.

And so in her work in *At Bertram's Hotel* she agrees with Chief Inspector Davy that Elvira, though young and beautiful, should not be let off. Miss Marple becomes a study in contrast : she combines intuitive powers and feminine softness with a razor-edged masculine sharpness. She shows in relief Christie's inarticulate, diffident and self effacing nature. But Christie, interestingly, creates Miss Marple, as a sociable, amiable and an easily accepted old lady. May be this reverse side of Agatha Christie's authorial self is presented only to provide a mask for Miss Marple who becomes an institution by herself.

Notes and References :

1. Harold Bloom, Introduction to *Agatha Christie*, Chelsea House Publishers, Philadelphia, p. 2.
2. *ibid*, p. 2.
3. Larry Landrum, *American Mystery and Detective Novels, A. Reference Guide*. American Popular Culture, Series Editor : M. Thomas Inge, Greenwood Press, Westport Connecticut London. p. 2.
4. Agatha Christie, *Nemesis*, in *Agatha Christie, Five Complete Miss Marple Novels*, Avenel Books, New York, p. 315.
5. Agatha Christie, *The Mirror Cracked from Side to Side*, in *Agatha Christie : Miss Marple Quintet*, Collins 1978, p. 574.
6. *ibid*, p. 574.
7. Robert Barnard, *A Talent To Deceive : An Appreciation of Agatha Christie*, William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., 1980, p. 29.
8. Agatha Christie, *Nemesis*, p. 280.
9. Agatha Christie, *Murder At The Vicarage*, in *Agatha Christie : A Miss Marple Quintet*. Collins 1978, p. 62.
10. *ibid*.
11. *ibid*.
12. Robert Barnard, *A Talent to Deceive*, p. 94.

Prophetic Visions : Negotiating Islam in the Works of Sarojini Naidu

SANTANU GANGULY

Sarojini Naidu (née Chattopadhyay) was born in the city of Hyderabad in Southern India in 1879. She was a brilliant student from her childhood days, and had started writing poetry even when she was in her teens. Under the able guidance of the veteran Congress leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and later on under the tutelage of Gandhi, Sarojini distinguished herself in the field of politics. She toured the country from north to south, and was a popular figure at Congress and other political conferences, lecturing on such diverse issues as the Arms Act, women's suffrage and emancipation, indentured labour, freedom of the press, role of the youth and the unity of the religions. However, very few people know that apart from delivering rousing speeches, Sarojini was also a gifted poet and has written close to two hundred poems. Unfortunately, these have not been subjected to the close scrutiny they deserve; as a result, she has been relegated to the sidelines as a minor poet of India. Whether she deserves such an infirm glory is debatable, but what is certain, in my opinion, is the strong influence of the Islamic world in her poems, speeches and letters. The aim of this paper is to study this influence and the ways in which it manifests itself in her works, as well as the factors that caused this happy influence.

Perhaps the greatest and the most indubitable cause of Sarojini's tremendous affinity for the Islamic is her birth, and subsequent childhood, in Hyderabad – the premier Muslim city of India at that time. Sarojini's father, Aghorenath Chattopadhyay was invited in 1878 to Hyderabad by the Nizam to establish and run an English-medium school. It is in this manner that the Chattopadhyay family came to be associated with Hyderabad, and subsequently settled there. In the process, as servant of the Nizam, Aghorenath went on to render yeoman service to the state: he founded the Hyderabad College (later rechristened Nizam's College); with the co-operation of his wife and other women, a girls' college was established by him as part of Osmania University; and he was also responsible for the introduction of the Special Marriage Act of British India in Hyderabad.

It was under these circumstances that Sarojini was born in Hyderabad in 1879. Right from the beginning, Sarojini was steeped in the sights, sounds and smells of this pulsating Muslim city of India. For a fact, she could not speak her mother tongue Bengali, spoke Hindi haltingly, but spoke Urdu – predominantly the language of the Muslims — as fluently as she spoke English. In the words of V. S. Naravane, Sarojini 'lisped in Urdu, not in Bengali' (83). An interesting, humorous incident is quoted by her friend Amar Nath Jha in this regard :

[At the Bihari Students' Conference at Bhagalpur in October 1917], she said, 'Gandhiji does not want English to be spoken. I don't know how I am going to speak in Hindustani. I tell you what. When I get up, ask the students to shout "English, English" But actually she spoke in high-flown Persianised Urdu. (7)

One may discern the use of Urdu/Persian words off and on not only in her poems but also in her correspondences, both with Muslims and non-Muslims (and even with Englishmen!) 'Salam alikum' remained a favourite greeting in her letters, although the nationalists preferred the more patriotic 'bande mataram', and in a letter written to Edmund Gosse in August 1899, she wishes her British literary mentor "salam alikum" (Paranjape 40)! She also uses the words "Id Mubarak", "mashallah", "barakat" and "Inshallah", the last being found even in a letter to her own daughter Leilamani, written on 4 January 1920 (Paranjape 145). In the same letter, she advises Leilamani to practise her Urdu thoroughly. In a lecture titled "Ideals of Islam" delivered at the Young Men's Muslim Association, Madras, she claimed, "The first accents I heard were in the tongue of Amir of Kusr" (Grover and Arora 51), and in her poems we find the use of words like 'Y'Allah', 'Ya Mahbub', 'pardahnashin', 'henna' and 'leili'. The title of the poem "Leili" assumes a special significance in this context. It is a poem of great nationalistic fervour, and records the proud and solemn moment when the nationalists take the holy oath of dedicating their lives to the service of the Motherland. In the dead of night, amidst mystic surroundings and with the golden moon as the sole witness, Sarojini and countless others like her "make the gods their incense-offering" (SF¹ 31), pledging not to rest till their Motherland is free and the people liberated and happy. Now "leili" is the Persian word for 'night', and keeping in mind the significance of the poem "Leili", the use of the Persian term assumes ineffable importance, indicating that fostering Hindu-Muslim brotherhood among countrymen is one of the primary concerns of those that "make the gods their incense-offering".

The fact that Sarojini hailed from a Hindu Brahmin family ensured that she had a wide knowledge of Hindu religion, mythology, and gods and goddesses; but more importantly, being born and brought up in the Muslim state of Hyderabad gave her access to the rich corpus of Islamic religion, history and literature. The result is that her poems demonstrate a happy commingling of both Hindu and Muslim cultures, with copious examples from Muslim literature, history and mythology maintaining a fine balance with Hindu rulers and religious figures. Sarojini was in the habit of regularly extending the frontiers of her knowledge of Islam; she writes to her friend Syed Mahmud on 30 May 1917 "to send me a list of good books on Islamic history which I am now reading with enjoyment" (Paranjape 129). "Humayun to Zobeida", reworked from the Urdu, is an exquisite love lyric, although here Sarojini has got her history slightly wrong, because Humayun's wife (Akbar's mother) was

not Zobeida but Hamida (Khan III). "The Song of Princess Zeb-un-Nissa" is from the Persian. Muslim literature again supplies the anecdote of Queen Gulnaar and King Feroze for the poem "The Queen's Rival". The magnificence of Muslim architecture is praised in both "Imperial Delhi" (the capital of the famous Delhi Sultanate dynasties like the Khaljis and the Tughlaqs) and "The Royal Tombs of Golconda" (built by the Qutb Shahi kings) as something that defies the ravages of time and preserves the fame and grandeur of the rulers for posterity.

As far as Islamic literature is concerned, she had the works of famous poets, both medieval and modern, at her fingertips. On Jalāl-ud-din Rūmi's *Masnavi*, she once ejaculated, "What is there so beautiful in all the wide and manifold realms of literature as that poem by the immortal lyricist of Rūm?" (Naravanē 88). At a time when the nation was in raptures over the poetry of the internationally acclaimed Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini hailed the Urdu poet Mohamud Iqbal as the greatest — "Today the greatest living Indian poet is Iqbal of Lahore with his mad eyes and melodious voice, who sings in a frenzy of inspiration" (Paranjape 166). She also had the habit of quoting lines and couplets from Muslim poets in her speeches and correspondences. In a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru written on 15 October 1926, she complains against her ill health with a quotation from Iqbal — "*Main sar-ā-pā dard hūn*" ("I am pained from head to foot") (Paranjape 190). On another occasion, speaking at a meeting on indentured labour at Allahabad on 19 January 1917, she said in chaste Persian :

Nakhuda dar kashteeay ma gar na bashad gu ma bash

Nakhuda dareem ma ra makhuda darkar nest

(What though there be no pilot to our boat? Go, tell him, we need him not.

God is with us, and we need no pilot) (Grover and Arora 142)

In many of her poems Sarojini refers to the city where she was born and grew up. 'In the Bazaars of Hyderabad', for example, describes the wares — both mundane and exotic — that are sold in a typical market of Hyderabad. The goods range from the cheap such as varieties of fruit and musical instruments, to the expensive such as daggers of jade, scabbards of gold, brocaded tunics, and turbans lined with silver. There are goods for joyous occasions such as marriages, and also for mournful occasions like funerals. Merchants, vendors, peddlers, goldsmiths, beautiful maidens selling sandalwood and exotic spices, and even magicians — all seem to enliven the place with the variety of their professions and products. If this poem presents the mood of economic Hyderabad, then the poem 'In a Latticed Balcony' captures its romantic charm, as we find a young lover enticing his beloved with gifts and trying to ensnare her in his web of amatory words and promises:

How shall I deck thee, O Dearest?
In hues of the peacock and dove.
How shall I woo thee, O Dearest?
With the delicate silence of love. (SF 105)

Finally, 'Nightfall in the City of Hyderabad' celebrates the onset of evening in the city in a series of dazzling romantic images. The star-spangled sky seems to scintillate like an ornament studded with precious stones, as richly caparisoned elephants move through the city lanes and the faithful are called to prayer :

Hark, from the minaret, how the muezzin's call
Floats like a battle-flag over the city wall
From trellised balconies, languid and luminous
Faces gleam, veiled in a splendour voluminous. (SF 55)

The extent to which Sarojini identified herself with the city may be gauged from the poem "The Hussain Saagar" in which she hails the Hussain Sagar Lake (a prominent landmark in Hyderabad) as "a living image of my soul" (SF 120). She also liked to invite her friends to Hyderabad, and as one of many examples we can refer to the letter she wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru on 11 May 1925, inviting him to come and share with her in Hyderabad the delights of boating on the Mir Alam Lake, "of lounging and loafing around and meeting the most truly cosmopolitan society in India" (Paranjape 177).

If Hyderabad finds pride of place in Sarojini's poetry, can the ruler of Hyderabad and other members of royalty be far behind? One may recall that it was the Nizam of Hyderabad who had invited Sarojini's father Aghorenath to Hyderabad to aid in the educational fortification of the state, and had bestowed upon the Chattopadhyays great honour and prestige as a result of which they became one of the most respected families in the state. It was once again this warm-hearted, munificent, Muslim ruler who granted Sarojini a generous scholarship that enabled the young girl to depart in September 1895 for England to pursue higher education. In the poem 'Ode to H.H. The Nizam of Hyderabad', she pays lofty tributes to this magnificent and popular ruler. She describes Hyderabad as the land of milk and honey flourishing under the efficient rule of the Nizam, where people from diverse races and creeds lived in peace and harmony. The splendour of the Nizam's court, says Sarojini, reminded one of the opulence of the courts of Baghdad and of the *Arabian Nights*, and the poets and bards sang of his greatness and valour. The poem ends with a plea to God to give the ruler strength to uphold and honour truth, virtue and valour :

So may the lustre of your days
Outshine the deeds Firdusi sung.
Your name within a nation's prayer,
Your music on a nation's tongue. (SF 30)

No wonder then that when the Nizam died in August 1911, Sarojini was so overwhelmed with grief at the death of the father-figure that for a few days she could do nothing and her life came to a standstill. When her publisher William Heinemann pressed her to send him the Preface to her forthcoming anthology of poems *The Bird of Time* (1912), she wrote to him in the letter dated 31 August 1911 :

I cannot tell you what it means to us who adored him. ...He was our heart's idol, the very light of our eyes. ...We would have given our lives to save him — forgive me I cannot write more — I only wanted to tell you why I could not send the Preface or answer your letter (paranjape 63).

Her grief is amply evident in the poem “Memorial Verses I: Ya Mahbub” written on 29 August 1911 in memory of the Nizam after he had died. She lauds the benevolence of this philanthropist and wonders whether the world will ever get to see such altruism again, now that he is dead.

Being a member of the topmost echelons of society of Hyderabad State made Sarojini familiar with many royal families. The only other aristocrat other than the Nizam on whom Sarojini has written a poem is Begum Nazli Raffia of Janjira. Significantly, she has not written on any Hindu aristocrat, though she was close to many, specially the Maharani of Gaekwad. In her poem ‘The Faery Isle of Janjira’, Sarojini describes the kingdom of Janjira as being so beautiful as to bear comparison with the kingdom of fairies; in this enchanted isle of palm woods and wild doves, life glided on at its own unhurried pace. Janjira, like Hyderabad, was an idyllic place, and the poet confesses that she would have gladly dwelt in this land of lotos-eaters had duties to her country not summoned her.

Sarojini was keenly aware of the poor position of women — both Hindu and Muslim — in Indian society in those days, and the indifference of the menfolk towards their female counterparts. Her days in Hyderabad had acquainted her with the problems faced by Muslim women behind the veil, and she had worked hard to bring about a change in their situation, however insignificant. She was troubled by the fact that the chaste wife got nothing but apathy and abuse from this male-dominated world in exchange for her sacrifice and love. She felt that this was more applicable to Muslim couples than to Hindus, as is revealed by her verbal chastisement of her friend Syed Mahmud for a similar misdemeanour. Mahmud had, after marriage, shown gross neglect of his newly married young wife by retaining her in her mother's home in Chapra while he continued to stay far away in Bankipur, thereby inviting Sarojini's wrath. In a letter to Syed Mahmud written on 6 January 1916, she enjoins upon him to take good care of his newly married bride :

Give to your little bride all the love that is in you to give: remember that while your life is enriched with many things, her life will be filled entirely by you — and let your great sense of tender chivalry guard and save the woman who is yours to cherish or crush from every breath of harm and every touch of pain (Paranjape 109).

Being a woman, Sarojini had a great desire to ameliorate the position of women, specially Muslim women, in Indian society, and she realized that the best way to achieve this would be to make the men more responsible towards the women, and give them the honour and dignity they deserved. Only then would the Muslim women, so cruelly incarcerated behind the practice of the “Purdah”, feel sufficiently emboldened to come forward and participate shoulder to shoulder with the men in the freedom struggle to rid the country of her British fetters — a dream that she cherished from beginning to end. She worked for this all her life, and was also largely successful in storming the conservative Muslim bastions, as indicated by reports specifically mentioning that Muslim women had started attending her speeches on women’s emancipation. Padmini Sengupta, for example, mentions the instance when Sarojini presided over the meeting of the Hindu Social Reform Association in early 1908 at the Mahboob College Hall, Secunderabad, in which “special accommodation was provided for *zenana* ladies” (67). She also cites the instance during the Jubilee celebrations of the *Stree Bodha* in March, 1908 in which Sarojini was a speaker, “many Mahomedan ladies were present ‘in a gallery behind the screens’. For the first time in Bombay Mahomedan ladies were to speak” (69). The name of Mrs. Akbar Ali is specifically mentioned in this regard.

The poem “The Pardah Nashin” is the poet’s condemnation of the evil Muslim system of ‘purdah’ through an affirmation of the incarcerated life and lack of independence faced by Muslim women. The first two stanzas of the poem speak of the “languid and sequestered ease” (SF 53) and the security of Muslim women behind the veil, prompting many critics like V.S. Naravane to claim that Sarojini was glorifying the ‘purdah’ system and harem life. Amar Nath Dwivedi considers the poem “an exquisite piece of fancy” (76). What the poet actually attempts, is to contrast this life of apparent ease and security to the harsh reality of life behind the veil. With this in mind, the unexpressed agony and anguish seems to become immortalized in these lines :

Time lifts the curtain unawares,
And sorrow looks into her face,
Who shall prevent the subtle years,
Or shield a woman’s eyes from tears? (SF 53)

Izzat Yar Khan believes that these lines highlight Sarojini’s supposed contention, in the manner of many Elizabethan sonneteers, that a woman’s beauty is defenceless against the onslaught of Time. He feels that the tears

shed by the veiled woman are, in essence, tears shed in sorrow at the impending loss of her health and beauty. He goes on to claim that the ending of the poem is paradoxical, because in lifting the veil, Time ensures that the woman is veiled no more: "The veil that man has drawn over the woman's face is lifted by Time. The futility of *Pardah* is therefore apparent" (126-127). This is nothing but a complete misinterpretation of a very poignant poem. It is amply evident that the lines portray Indian women as the victim of a conservative society, with social reformers being able to do little about the matter. This poem, along with its companion poem "Suttee" censuring the evil Hindu system of *Sati*, seems to hint that in spite of being highly developed, both Hindu and Muslim civilizations were severely apathetic and cynical towards women, a feeling that needed to be corrected immediately if there were to be independence and progress for the country in the true sense.

None since Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the architect of the Bengal Renaissance, did any non-Muslim show such a strong erudition in and a deep sensitivity towards the Islamic religion and theology as Sarojini Naidu. "She was not religious in the accepted sense, for she believed that the Divine was in all things. Islam meant as much to her — its culture and virtues — as did the rituals of her Brahmin heritage which she revered" (Tara Ali Baig, *vandemataram*). References in her speeches to the religion of the Muslims are too numerous and popular to merit a separate discussion; in fact, they far outnumber her references to Hinduism. Her letters too make copious references to Islam, not only when she is writing to her Muslim friends or fellow politicians, but also when she is corresponding with Hindus. As an instance, one may cite the letter written in April 1921 to her own son Ranadheera Naidu, in which she wishes him *Id Mubarak* and congratulates him on having diligently observed the ritual of fasting (Paranjape 159). What greater example can there be of her catholicity of vision?

Many of her poems address Islam directly or indirectly. "The Old Woman", for instance, gives us a picture of a true devotee of Islam who does not forsake her faith although life had been utterly cruel and unjust to her. In her youth she had been beautiful and had a family; but all is now lost due to the vagaries of fortune. Now she is blind and bent, poor and hungry, and forsaken by the world. Yet she goes on praising God :

'La ilaha illa-I-Allah

La ilaha illa-I-Allah

Muhammad-ar-Rasul-Allah' (SF 126)

"The Night of Martyrdom" talks of "Th' enduring loveliness of Allah's name" (FD² 6) and the greatness of martyrs like Ali, Hassan and Hussain who uphold it. The beggars in the poem "Wandering Beggars", moving about with the name of Allah on their lips, remind one of the itinerant *faqirs*, *derveshes* and Sufi mystics. Who can ignore Sarojini's acclaimed poem "The Call to Evening

Prayer” — her supreme tribute to national and religious integration — which posits the different religions of India congregating for prayer in an atmosphere of religious brotherhood and tolerance. Significantly, it is the Muslims with their cries of “Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!” (SF 136) who lead the procession, with the Hindus bringing up the rear. In many of the poems, we find Sarojini beautifully adapting the tenets of Islam to her viewpoint to pointedly address issues of patriotism. “The Imam Bara”, for instance, with its reference to the tragic and edifying martyrdom of Ali, Hassan and Hussain, is ably used as a tool by the poet to remind the people of the sacrifices that the country demanded of them in her hour of need. “A Song from Shiraz” is Sarojini’s gift of love and hope to her suffering countrymen. A happy commingling of religion and nationalism is found in the poem “The Prayer of Islam”, where 10 of the 99 Arabic names of God as used by Muslims are listed; the ‘prayer’ ultimately becomes a resonant plea to Allah to grant people the strength and the resilience to

transmute from hour to hour
Our mortal weakness into power,
Our bondage into liberty (SF 168)

P.V. Rajyalakshmi analyses the poet’s treatment of love in the poems of the section in *The Broken Wing* titled “The Temple” as having a definite Islamic influence :

Love progresses from ‘khūdi’ (selfhood) to ‘khūdai’ (Godhood), from ‘Haqiqi’ (Earthly love) to ‘Mazāzi’ (Divine Love), and from ‘Daad’ (Agony) to ‘Mast’ (Ecstasy), in the manner of Omar Khayyām, the Sufi mystics, and Ghālib, Hāli, Hāfiz and Iqbāl (90).

It did not take Sarojini’s astute mind much time to see through the divide-and-rule scheme of the British, and realize that the need of the hour was Hindu-Muslim unity .The more aggressive the British became to annihilate this bonding, greater should be the resolve of the Indians, felt she, to preserve it. Given the situation, the task of holding out olive branches to each other was not easy. The anti-Hindu indoctrination of the Muslims by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of Aligarh had bred in the Muslim mind a sense of mistrust and hostility towards the Hindu. The British too had wasted no time in hobnobbing with the Muslim aristocrats and political leaders — Curzon visited East Bengal in February 1904 fomenting animosity among the Muslims against the Hindus, and even granted Nawāb Salimūllah of Dacca a loan of 14 lakh rupees at a very low rate of interest in exchange for open support of the partition. All these events culminated in the formation of the Muslim League in Dacca in December 1906, which was destined to have such an irrevocable impact on the course of Indian nationalism.

Under these circumstances, with both Hindu and Muslim political leaders trying their utmost to save the day, Sarojini found herself in a curious position

that worked to her and also to her country's advantage at large. She posited herself as a person *Hindu in flesh but Muslim in spirit*, thereby appealing in the same tone to both her Hindu and Muslim brethren. On the one hand, as a Hindu by birth (and a Brahmin at that) coming from a highly respected family, she spoke on Hindu culture and the traditional Hindu benevolence, quoting examples and incidents from Hindu history and mythology. On the other hand, she projected herself as being Muslim in spirit, coming as she did from a Muslim state and growing up under the refreshing influence of an Islamic heritage :

...I come from the premier Müssalmān city in India. The premier Müssalmān power rules over the city from which I come, and there the tradition of Islam has truly been carried out for two hundred years, that tradition of democracy that knows how out of its legislation to give equal rights and privileges to all the communities whose destinies it controls (Grover and Arora 51).

In her speeches all over the country, she sought to dispel from the minds of the Hindus their misconceptions about Islam and to present it as a religion of love and brotherhood :

Brotherhood is the fundamental doctrine that Islam taught: brotherhood of civic life, of intellectual life, of spiritual life in the sense of leaving other religions and creeds free to offer their worship. This is what we call modern toleration, the larger outlook, this is what we call civilisation.... (Grover and Arora 52).

Quite aptly, she gave the example of the great Muslim king Akbar as the epitome of benevolence. She spoke of the kinship of Hinduism and Islam, how both were parts of the same universal Principle, and how the tenets of one complemented the other's :

Young Muslim is to put his contribution — not the sword made of steel but the sword of the Islamic spirit which has been re-tempered in the older fires of Vedic cult — the sword of Muslim love dedicated to the service of Vedic India (Grover and Arora 54).

Citing the example of the famous Muslim poet Md. Iqbal whose poems had come as a clarion call to bind the two communities together, she expressed the desire to be his Hindu counterpart aspiring after the same objective. The seriousness of her mission and the earnestness of her voice can be gauged from her advice to G. Natesan, editor of the *Indian Review* :

You have realised that the Müssalmāns have definitely held out their hand to the Hindus. Be gracious, be wise, be brave when the Hindus hold out their hand to the Müssalmāns at the next Congress. Do not analyse motives too closely, but take the proffered hand and hold it fast and so represent truly the Indian world as far as your influence reaches..... (qtd in SenGupta 133).

Although Sarojini was fond of projecting herself as a neo-Muslim, never did she sound artificial, nor did it appear as if she was doing it for political mileage. Whether this particular idea of Sarojini to foster Hindu-Muslim ties proved efficacious in the long run may be debated (given the volatile political situation in the country), but it certainly made both the Hindus and the Muslims sit up and take notice, if attendance at her speeches is any indication. In any case, her convictions earned her the love and respect of contemporary Muslim politicians — Abul Kalam Azad, Saifuddin Kitchlew, the Ali Brothers who launched the Khilafat Agitation, Dr. Ahmad Ansari, and countless others belonging to both the Congress and the Muslim League. She started getting invitations to the Muslim League sessions (such as the historic session in Lucknow on March 2, 1911 that sought to adopt a new Constitution seeking loyal co-operation with Hindus in national and social matters), and at a conference in Geneva in 1920, she proudly claimed, “the first political speech I made was at the meeting of the Muslim League”. Prominent League leaders started seeking her advice before deliberations with the Congress. Most importantly, Md. Ali Jinnah, who would play such a momentous role in Indian politics later on, became her life-long friend and they shared a tremendous love and respect for each other.

This paper has tried to trace the impact of Muslims and Islam on the life, outlook and activities of Sarojini Naidu. We must acknowledge that had it not been for her father Aghorenath who came to Hyderabad when he could have settled in any state (including his native Bengal), her life and political activities, even the themes of her poems, may have taken a radically different tinge indeed. But she was destined to be born and to grow up in this quintessentially Muslim city with its liberal people and tolerant ruler, and this left an indelible mark on her mind and her spirit. It gave her a broad-mindedness that put to shame the trivial bickering of other political leaders over such unimportant issues as cow-slaughter and use of loudspeakers at mosques. It prepared her for her extensive journeys over the length and breadth of the country later on in life when she would get the opportunity to observe her fellow men from close quarters and be a part of the ups and downs in their lives. In a speech delivered in Madras in 1903, she had thundered, “I was born in Bengal. I belong to the Madras Presidency. In a Mahomedan city was brought up and married and there I lived; still I am neither a Bengalee, nor Madrassee, nor Hyderabadsee but I am an Indian, not a Hindu, not a Brahmin, but an Indian to whom my Mahomedan brother is as dear and as precious as my Hindu brother” (Grover and Arora 179). The confluence of the great Hindu culture which she was born with and the great Islamic culture which she imbibed and breathed thus enabled her to send her unique message of unity and hope to the teeming millions of her country, giving them the strength and the resilience to progress on the road to freedom.

Notes —

1. *The Sceptred Flute*, an anthology published by Kitabistan of Allahabad in 1948, which is a collected edition of her first three anthologies viz. *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917). It will henceforth be abbreviated as 'SF'.
2. *The Feather of the Dawn*, henceforth abbreviated as 'FD'.

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The Tiger or the Tamer : One Aspect of the Post-Colonial Dilemma

LAMIA GÜLÇUR

One of the most important encounters of history is no doubt the encounter of two different cultures in the paradigm of colonialism. Very broadly speaking the term colonialism and its aftermath, post-colonialism, no longer apply to just the geographic and historic concept of imperialism, but also to the sociological and historical conditions that are created through this interaction. Therefore, all forms of alienation or 'othering' in one way or another can be discussed in the context of post-colonial discourse.

History has shown that authority rests on knowledge and power. In encounters between the colonizer and the colonized, the business of 'knowing' became the export to the colonies by way of language, literature and learning. As part of the civilizing mission of the colonizer, a large wealth of indigenous cultures was suppressed by imperial control. The most virulent weapon in the imposition of so called valuable knowledge and the creation of the 'Other' for the colonized has been no doubt the control over language by the hegemonic power. The colonial process itself begins with language. Language enables one to name the world and therefore to 'understand it.' In return, however, since it is through language that we come to know reality, naming means controlling reality. That is, having power over it. Another site on which resistance and oppression have been operative in the colonial world has been the body which carries the physical signs of cultural difference. The consciousness of body imposed on the colonized by the imperialist powers becomes a negating experience. Colonialist authority, therefore, as Bhabha explains, benefits from and demands the production of differentiations, individuations, identity effects "through which discriminatory practices can map out subject populations that are tarred with the visible and transparent mark of power" (Bhabha 34).

The process of decolonization is also problematic and leads to other encounters. It involves a radical dismantling of European codes as well as post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant imperial discourses. The mimic man who was himself colonized now appears as a paradoxical figure who wants to reclaim his indigenous norms and values and yet at the same time continues to see them through the eyes of the colonial powers. So he takes up their role as the civilizing agent. In short, he too forces the colonized natives to be alienated from their own culture. The mimic man perceives of himself not as a part of his culture but as the 'Other.' In Suleri's words he becomes the hybrid subject of post-colonialism "fraught with the idiom of dubiety" (Suleri 111). The hybrid, thus divides himself as well as others both from their pre-colonial past and from their post-colonial future. The

demarcations are as fictive and as persistent as those laid out by the hegemonic powers and therefore, all forms of alienation or 'othering' in one way or another can be discussed in the context of post-colonial discourse.

Narayan, in *A Tiger for Malgudi*, explores forms of alienation and exploitation, power and disempowered culture. He leads us to an idea of nation which belongs neither to the colonizer nor to the colonized, but rather to a confirmation of the precariousness of power itself. In the story this instability is depicted by the example of Master, the *sanyassi*.

Narayan's hero is a magnificent tiger. His mimic men are Captain, who initially captures the tiger and Madan, the Hollywood-style film director. His solution is Master, a *sanyassi* or one who renounces everything and undergoes a complete change of personality. The story itself is based on the power exerted by colonialism which results in displacement, distortion and dislocation. This act of violence is enacted on the tiger for as Narayan states: "Man in his smugness never imagines for a moment that other creatures may also possess ego, values, outlook, and the ability to communicate, though they may be incapable of audible speech. Man assumes he is all-important, that all else in creation exists only for his sport, amusement, comfort, or nourishment" (8). The colonizer refuses to acknowledge the existence or relevance of a culture different from his own as is evident from the tiger's comment on what the hunters are saying about him:

"Oh no, the local animal expert must have explained 'you must understand that a male tiger hardly ever lives with the family. ...Must be a visitor from another forest. Tigers are not family-bound like monkeys and other creatures. Monkeys belong to a more advanced group... 'Human beings have their own theories, and it is always amusing to hear them talk about us. Such ignorance and self-assurance!'" (24)

The tiger, who cannot communicate in terms understandable to man and whose magnificent physical appearance is a sign of difference, becomes the prime target in the story. His consciousness of his body is a negating activity, a third person consciousness as explained by Fanon (323). As he sits ruminating in his cage the Tiger says:

"You are not likely to understand that I am different from the tiger next door, that I possess a soul within this forbidding exterior. I can think, analyse, judge, remember and do everything that you can do, perhaps with greater subtlety and sense. I lack only the faculty of speech...You are carried away by appearances — my claws and fangs and the glowing eyes frighten you no doubt. I don't blame you. I don't know why God has chosen to give us this fierce make-up, the same God who has created the parrot, the peacock, and the deer, which inspire poets and painters. ...I would

not blame you for keeping your distance — I myself shuddered at my own reflection on the still surface of a pond while crouching for a drink of water. ...not when I was really a wild beast, but after I came under the influence of my Master and learnt to question, 'Who am I?' (11-12)

By a subtle process the tiger has become conscious of his body. The body he had not been aware of when he was in the wild but was made conscious of in his encounter with 'civilization' so to speak.

The tiger first encounters man/civilization, after his mate and four cubs are killed by certain villagers. The king of the jungle, as the tiger considers himself to be, strangely enough does not go out and attack the villagers/villages directly, but prefers to set up a subversive strategy of his own: he attacks and kills livestock; he is careful to change his location every so often so that he is not caught. One day however, he is outwitted and caged by Captain, the epitome of the hybrid, the descendent of the mimic man.

Captain is the owner of the Grand Malgudi Circus. Captain's circus had its origin in a certain 'Grand Irish Circus' owned by a brown-skinned man who had a portable signboard painted, GRAND IRISH CIRCUS and who called himself O'Brien though he never uttered a word of English or Irish "but spoke 'The Native Language' in order to establish rapport with his public as he always took the trouble to explain." (29). Captain buys the ultimate mimic's parrot and monkey (animals which are pronounced mimics themselves) to set up his own circus. Later, however, the parrot and monkey are not considered adequate and takes the help of Dadhaji. Dadhaji is an economically well-established circus owner who has lived with over a hundred animals for over fifty years; he learns to tame any creature on four legs. Armed with this knowledge as well as the fortune he comes to inherit from Dadhaji, Captain decides to shift his circus to Malgudi, his home town. Although he first thinks of naming the circus after the Irishman or Dadhaji, he settles for the name Grand Malgudi Circus because he contemplates: "...just to show my roots are here, although I must confess that I had thought of perpetuating my benefactors' names originally." (32). As a result the town of Malgudi becomes famous for its circus instead of for its mountains and river. Captain rushes to adopt the innovations of the West in search of economic wealth.

Captain overhears of the existence of the Tiger from the villagers who pay numerous visits to the office of the Collector in hopes of assistance to rid themselves of the danger. The villagers' petitions seem perpetually to become lost in governmental red-tape; Captain offers them salvation. The villagers claim that the tiger is extraordinary. Captain is sure of his training. He feels that: "He is an ordinary tiger, black and yellow, with four legs and only one tail and no extraordinary creature. I'll deal with him don't worry..." (36). Goaded by his instincts for power and economic gain, Captain is ultimately triumphant and the Tiger is trapped.

Captain is overjoyed to see the new addition to his circus. The tiger is perplexed. What he calls his first act of obedience is accomplished when out of desperation he dashes out and finds himself in a second cage which is to become his home in the Circus. The magnificent animal is named Raja, king, and promptly put on a diet so that he becomes what Captain calls 'slim' and 'agile.' Raja lives through personal hell during the initial stages of his apprehension and training:

"....I was bewildered and did not know why I was brought here, or what they were planning to do with me...it was irksome to stay in that cramped space all day and night—my only activity being lying down and getting up, and again lying down and getting up...grumbling and whining. But no one cared. Being used to the vastness and freedom of jungle life, I found this an impossible condition of living. I could do nothing more than pace up and down in despair. This was hell.... and endless state of torment with no promise of relief or escape. I still had no conception that food could come to one without a chase. These were the stages of knowing attained through suffering. I can hardly describe that kind of suffering, an emptiness, a helplessness, and a hopelessness behind the bars...Bars of iron, unbending and perpetually pressing against one's face. I had had no contact with any sort of metal in my life; now this combination of man and metal subdued me — metal which in various forms served the evil ends of man, as prison bars, traps and weapons. ...When Captain showed himself outside my cage, a hope always rose in me, however slight, that some improvement was likely in my lot. That was probably the way he worked, driving me on to look on him ultimately as my Saviour. ..." (p. 43)

Raja's trials do not end there. Captain has various plans for him, and using a whip and a chair he lashes the uncomprehending tiger to do various tricks. The lashings make Raja's face smart. He says of himself : "I was ignorant, bewildered, and in pain" (44). The fact that there is a language barrier between him and Captain is of course no help until Raja is told what is expected of him by one of the other animals:

"I heard one of those watching animals suggest to me in our language, which no tyrant could suspect or suppress as it would sound like merely a grunt or a sigh. You will get everything—only run round as he commands. He is a madcap and we must learn to live with him. We are in his hands. ...Mutual communication was one privilege left for us animals; human beings could not interfere with our freedom of speech because they never suspect that we have our own codes, signals, and idioms." (44- 45).

Life is not easy in the Circus. The mastery of one skill leads to demands for the mastery of yet another. First expected to run around the arena, Raja is later coerced into jumping through hoops of fire, and ultimately into sitting opposite a goat and sharing a plate of milk with the animal. This last act is to be Captain's ultimate accomplishment. It is to be presented with fanfare for the Jubilee Show a Four-in-One Act. Captain believes that this act will be unique to his country. He claims that Raja... "will go through the act with precision, and finish the sequence as befits a country dedicated to non-violence, with a sip of milk in the company of a goat" (63). Ironically, sipping milk in the company of a goat, an act representing the ideals of non-violence is itself achieved through violence, as Captain pushes Raja to perform.

The violence and unrelenting drive on the part of Captain awakens an unanticipated admiration in Raja who muses:

"I began to respect him for his capabilities. I began to admire him—a sort of worshipful attitude was developing in me. I had thought in the jungle that I was supreme. Now that was gone. I was a defeated king, and Captain the unquestioned suzerain." (46)

However, Raja is quite aware of the hierarchy in the circus setup. Though he might be the largest and the most beautiful of the animals—the king, he is aware that those animals who emulate human-beings the most closely are those who are the happiest:

"The ape was the most light-hearted of all. He was the happiest animal in the circus, walking about freely in human company, fondly clinging to the finger of one or the other—even holding hands with Captain sometimes. He must be conceited fancying himself to be a human being; smoking cigarettes, sitting in chairs and drinking tea from cup, wearing trousers and coat and cap and spectacles and chattering merrily all the time...(45). ...How I envied his freedom! I wished I could also go about like him. But a tiger seems to have a curse on it—no one can tolerate the sight of a tiger walking freely about, being burdened with size, might, and the fierce make-up that nature has given us. What a blessing to be the stature of an ape! Human beings approve of him because he approximates their idea of what a creature should be in appearance and size." (54)

So the hybrid Captain rewards these animal subjects that recognize and adhere to the stipulations of his power game, much as his imperial master had done.

The show of non-violence: Raja drinking the milk he despises in the company of a goat, an animal he would very much like to devour, demonstrates Captain's wish to show to the world how confident he is of his authority over the tiger and that no one has anything to fear. The act nevertheless comes to a violent end when Raja, taking advantage of the momentary distraction of

Captain, decapitates the goat with surgical precision. This act of violence is hidden from the audience as “efficient men behind a curtain drawn around” clear the place for the next item as though nothing had happened. The next item is appropriately chimps in tuxedo, wearing spectacles. These animals, with their special charms and jugglery, completely divert the minds of the audience so that no question is asked as to “how the preceding item had ended” (65).

The instant itself however, has been registered on film by Madan, the film director. Filled with Hollywood style ideas, Madan approaches Captain. He has only praise for Raja : “As I watched he was so quick no one could have noticed his action. His head shot up like a cobra’s and just pecked at the goat... but it was like a — it was snap-action, neat, precise, like a surgeon’s.” (67). In fact he is so impressed by what he has seen that even Raja comments: “The man was so full of enthusiasm and praise for me that he became incoherent and could hardly complete a sentence....” (67). Both of these hybrid personalities have one thing in common; they admire Raja for his splendour but wish to put him to use for their economic gain. Madan has a scenario in mind with which Captain ultimately agrees to comply since he too will be able to get his share from this lucrative venture.

Madan, who was so impressed by Raja, requires him to perform a totally different role once Captain has agreed to bring him on the film set. Raja is to be captured by a hero called Jaggu, a peasant giant Madan ran across in some village, who will finally train it to live at peace with the goat. Madan’s ideas about life, film and morality are a medley of colonizer discourse and indigenous expediency :

“All the sentimentalists’ outcry against the so-called sex and violence must be ignored. They make too much out of it. Life is created and made possible only through sex and violence, no use fighting against it, shutting one’s eyes to the facts of life. ...Non-violence is India’s contribution to civilization. I got the idea from your own speech before the tiger act; violence can be conquered only by non-violence. ...How can you show non-violence without showing a lot of violence and how bad it is?” (71-72)

Jaggu the peasant giant is cast in the role of the ultimate puppet. His appearance is the main concern among the film crew who fit him up with a leopard skin covering which is strapped across his shoulders; his hair is tousled so that it stands like an aura, and he is given a moustache to make him even more imposing. He is apparently an eastern style Tarzan. Nonetheless, there is one thing the crew has not taken into consideration and that is the fact that Jaggu the giant is genuinely terrified of the tiger. (Much like the post-colonial leader is afraid of the new state he inherits). No amount of promises, money, or threats about the contract he has signed will make him approach Raja even though a cage separates them. He does not wish for the comforts they seem to offer him. He does not want a more beautiful wife, as the film crew suggests; he

does not want to live in the city; he does not even want to have a mistress along with a wife; he is not interested in the promises of Hollywood-style Westernization. Since the giant will not make the effort, once again the tiger has to be coerced into performing feats that he is not accustomed to. Madan has all sorts of suggestions to make Raja comply. He suggests that the tiger's nails be pulled out since that is what they do in Hollywood. When Captain refuses and tells him to go to Hollywood under those circumstances, Madan claims he wants to make a hundred-percent Indian film. Another Hollywood proposition is that they should sew up the tiger's lips temporarily, or that they should use a small Hollywood style electrical gadget to subdue Raja. At first Captain relies on his whip alone, but later as a certain degree of greed overcomes him and he is gradually corrupted by his contact with the film world he agrees to use the gadget.

The two men try to exercise even more control over Raja's body. They want him to stand on his hind legs so that Jaggu, the giant, can grapple with him. The task is a difficult one for Raja: "A creature needs the support of four legs for stability. Somehow human beings balance on two legs... It's not only difficult but a degradation for a quadruped -you are too exposed..." (97), he muses. But Captain will not give up. He wants total submission from Raja who will not comply :

"...I swished my tail and grunted. ...But he was not the one to care for my inclinations. It was his will that counted, he knew he could finally impose on me. . .'Go away before any harm befalls you, my good man. After all you have fed me and protected me. I shall honour you for it. But please go away and leave me alone. I won't be your slave any more...I won't do any of the meaningless turns these foolish men around want me to do...But he was drunk with authority. I wished he could save himself, but he was not helping himself at all. He would not rest till he had exacted total submission...I caught myself thinking. 'Why should I fear this creature no bigger than my tail?' First time in my life such an idea was occurring to me...In recognition of our relationship and as a final warning I growled and just raised my paw...I just raised a forepaw, taking care to retract my claws, and knocked the thing out of his hand. The blow caught Captain under his chin, and tore off his head. It was surprising that such a flimsy creature, no better than a membrane stretched over some thin framework, so little stuff inside, should have held me in fear so long." (99-100)

So the power, the first generation of hybrid that has learned all his lessons from the mimic is put to rest. It is the end of Captain, the man who brought fame to Malgudi in the form of a zoo, who gave priority to his own exploitation turning people away from what the tiger calls the mountains and valleys of Malgudi - its essence. That Captain, who suitably introduced his circus in three

languages: in Hindi since it was his national language and given to the people by Mahatma Gandhi himself; also in English because as their beloved, respected leader Nehru put it "...opens a window on the world. In Tamil because it is, ah, our Mother Tongue, in which our greatest poets...composed (58). That man who loved his circus and the animals that made his business a success, and Malgudi because he was born and grew up there and because Malgudi had sent him, this backwoods boy - living and playing in the dust of Abu Lane to Albert Mission School to make a scholar of him. Captain, the wielder of power, the man who kept six cushioned seats always in reserve for a hierarchy of local officials on whose goodwill his survival depended expires in the claws of Raja, the king. Just like the colonizer the mimic/hybrid is doomed for total control and terror.

The tiger is now aware of the flimsy material man is made of; he has also become aware of the fragile nature of the chair that once cowed him into obedience. This cognizance also brings a certain admiration with it :

"Now I know a chair is a worthless, harmless piece of furniture but at that time (when Captain was first training him) I dreaded the sight of it. It appeared to me a mighty engine of destruction. How Captain and men like him could ever realize how a chair would look to a tiger is really a wonder. Now I have enough understanding of life to smash a chair if it is flourished before my eyes. But then it looked terrible." (47)

Madan, the Hollywood-style film director, and his crew disperse after the upheaval but they are not destroyed. No doubt they will continue to conceive of new projects that might enable them to combine sex and violence as presented by Hollywood with Mahatma Gandhi's teachings of non-violence. Their schemes will proliferate although the undertakings may be marginal. It is evident that the mishmash which is their calling will not die out.

Once free, the tiger does not return to his jungle. Just like the colonized, his encounter with the human being has wrought changes in him. So he walks calmly into the nearest town to perpetrate havoc, much to his surprise. His experience of people until then has been that they sit placidly in their seats while he cowered before Captain's whip and that they are fearless and hardy. Now he finds that they flee before him like a herd of deer although he has no intention of attacking them... He observes their general lack of a sense of security and their irrational dread of losing their assets :

"...You, nearest to me, hugging the cash box, you are craven with fear, afraid to breathe. Go on; count the cash, if that's your pleasure. I just want to watch, that's all. ...If my tail trails down to the street, if I am blocking your threshold, it is because, I'm told, I'm eleven feet tip to tail. I can't help it. I'm not out to kill... Tigers attack only when they feel hungry, unlike human beings who slaughter one another without purpose or hunger..." (102)

Calmly the tiger enters the school, the centre for the insemination of standard knowledge. The headmaster is cowed and hides himself in the attic. The town is in an uproar. The children are first led out of the school and then brought back and locked up in a hall. The people want to rid themselves of the brute, the beast. Master is one of the contenders. He admonishes the teachers and the public saying: ““Never use the words *beast or brute*. They’re ugly words coined by man in his arrogance. The human being thinks all other creatures are “beasts”. Awful word!”” (p. 103). And who is Master actually? When asked the question his answer is: ““You are asking a profound question. I’ve no idea who I am! All my life I have been trying to find the answer. Are you sure you know who you are?”” (103). Through Master we come to the last stage in the colonization process, or what some critics call decolonization, the emergence of the figure who has succeeded to what has become a fantastically polyvalent existence of no-placeness, the fringe-dweller of societies and civilizations, the individual who resists hegemony. Master is a man who has left his wife and children behind, put aside his suits and cigarettes as well as his moneymaking job to search for himself. He is well-read in the myths of India; he can quote from the *Gita*, and much to the surprise of the honorable office holders he is proficient in Sanskrit. In fact he claims to know ten other languages but prefers to write only in Sanskrit, yet he does not truly know who he is. He is still under the pressure of the dominating fictive demarcations of his pre-colonial past and his post-colonial future.

Though Master claims that he will walk out of the school in peace with the tiger, at the outset he is overruled. The public prefers to put their safety in the hands of Alphonse, a poacher who has a gun. As Fanon says the middle class will always turn to the imperial country when they believe their interests are in danger (Fanon 74). Alphonse is armed not with the wisdom of their past but with the metal weapon of the colonizer. He is helped in his mission by two older students. They are typical hybrid mimics who are ready to serve the powers that be and suppress those who lack power. They put up the ladder, bring food and drink to Alphonse. They appear to the crowd as the perfect citizens of the future. Alphonse however, is not able to perform his task. He passes out in a fit of drinking and the responsibility of ‘saving’ the public rests on Master, the intellectual. That Master who is not sure of who he is and yet who was arrested during the Independence Movement for tearing down the Union Jack, and then “again for inscribing on the walls, with brush and tar, “Quit India”, aimed at the British (132).

Driving a motor car and dressed like a top with his tie and suit and polished shoes. Master then worked for a foreign insurance firm.

Well aware that there is no going back wholly to the past, Master tells tiger that he is no longer tiger, he will not have to snap at people or attack.

Leave that style out. You won't have use for such violent gestures any more. It all goes into your past. A child, even before learning to walk, with a pat of its chubby hands just crushes the life out of a tiny ant crawling near it. And as he grows all through life he maintains a vast store of aggressiveness, which will be subdued if he is civilized, or expended in some manner that brings retaliation. But violence cannot be everlasting...Sooner or later it has to go, if not through wisdom, definitely through decrepitude...The demon, the tormentor, or the tyrant in history ...becomes helpless and dependent, lacking the strength to even swat a fly." (125-126).

The tiger understands Master, but for a fleeting moment has visions of his past, of the bamboo shade and the monkeys and the jackals. Unlike human company he remembers that they were pleasant because they minded their own business. There is no going back however, the division is too sharp, the experience of human society too consuming and fragmenting. The public on the other hand have now started referring to him as a tiger and not as a beast. The headmaster who is woken up from his sleep in the attic, where he fled from the tiger, believes the experience to be a crazy dream. Perhaps the hazy dream world that he has been made to inhabit.

The tiger follows Master to the place where he will meditate. All the while they come across people, some of whom are worshipping, others rioting or engaged in a bloody strife. Master respectively advises them not to abandon their God and to keep their peace. He is in a sense drawing them to understanding the limbo they are in. The threat of the tiger, once a circus performer and now free to walk the streets, has an unsettling effect creating what Bhabha calls the limbo of new statehood (Bhabha; 34).

The tiger and Master are not left in peace. Master's wife comes to call him back telling him she will accept him as he is. But he refuses her saying "Listen attentively : my past does not exist for me, or a future. I live for the moment, and that awareness is enough for me. To attain this state, I have gone through much hardship ...I have erased from my mind my name and identity and all that it implies." (p. 148).

Time takes its toll and the time comes when as Master says he must prepare himself by releasing himself from all bondage. He begins by releasing the tiger and explains that: "No relationship, human or other, or association of any kind could last for ever. Separation is the law of life right from the mother's womb." (151). Zoo officials are called and come to get the tiger. Their first reaction when they see him is :

"Oh, truly the most magnificent of his kind, regal, of grand stature, although you think he is faded. We have our own system of feeding and improving with tonic and he'll be record-breaking. Our zoo can then claim to have the largest tiger for the whole country." (151).

With a certain sense of pride the tiger is taken to the zoo where he will end his days. He has been totally severed from his past, but the future no longer holds the horrors of the circus, since the hand that strokes his back is that of a friend and it is Master who leads him to the cage that is to take him to the zoo :

“You may get in now, Raja, a new life opens for you. Men, women, and children, particularly children, hundreds of them will come to see you. You will make them happy. ...Both of us will shed our forms soon and perhaps we could meet again, who knows? So goodbye for the present.” (152).

Thus Raja is taken to a completely new, but safe future to face other and hopefully more joyful encounters where he can impress the future generations with his beauty and his power.

At the end of the novel, Narayan seems to be valorizing a quietistic retreat in the form of the sanyassi, Master, and the old tiger to be kept in the zoo for the rest of his life. This is a point on which the novelist has been almost viciously attacked by writers of his own background. However, I would like to propose that Narayan does not see the process of colonization and decolonization as a historical phenomenon but rather as the liberation of self-hood from the imposition of ‘othering’ brought about by those who hold political and economic power. The ending of the novel is an acknowledgment of the demarcation between the pre-colonial and the post-colonial pasts to a new and yet unmarked position of statehood, a new beginning filled with new encounters.

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“Pathikbandhu”

— A Feminist Interpretation

RAKHI GHOSH

“Pathikbandhu” was written at a time when the pioneer Bangla women novelists enlivened the literary scene of Bengal. Indeed nineteenth century Bengal heralded the dawn of a new age – the historians fittingly named it the Renaissance. However, such a dawn did not succeed in erasing the darkness of the Bengali ‘antahpur’. Yet women experienced the urge to weave tales of that life with which they were closely bound. Amazingly at this time quite a number of women novelists chose to write novels. Their creativity had found a suitable mode of expression in the conservative nineteenth century Bengal. They sought to express the language of their soul through the stories that they wove. Not that they wanted to discuss only the burning issues of the time. Rather their aim was self-expression in an attempt to revive and restore their identity. In writing novels they showed to the world that they existed, in a way it was their ‘jihad’ against the prejudiced society of the time. The act of writing in a way was a rebellion that they enacted; they realized that the pen too could wield power and by utilizing this power, women demanded equal rights for themselves, the right to education, the right to pursue a career, the right to be professional women instead of restricting themselves merely to the male-defined duties of being a proper housewife and perfect mother.

It was amidst such circumstances that Sita Devi (1896-1974), daughter of Ramanando Chattopadhyay composed her novels. Thanks to her father’s iconoclasm and progressive ideas Sita Devi received a stimulating intellectual environment. Her father cherished the concept of freedom of thought and expression and Sita Devi being the younger daughter fully reaped the advantages of such a non-restricting environment. From her very childhood, she took a keen interest in the pursuits of boys and unwittingly the seeds of women’s liberation were sown in the nourishing recesses of her heart. She tried to wean women from their claustrophobic niche of the conservative nineteenth century ‘andarmahal’. She felt the need to acquaint women with the Indian struggle for independence in which her father played so prominent a role. She actively participated in the protest against the Bengal partition and was part of the eager audience that gathered to listen to the magical orations of Rabindranath, Gandhiji, Tilak, B. C. Paul, Annie Besant etc. Organizing an active movement to win independence for the nation, it formulated within her the urge for women’s liberation. As Ramanando welcomed the Brahmo movement and became its active member, his two daughters Santa and Sita breathed in the fragrance of a liberated Bengali society. Such a perspective provided Sita Devi an insight into the bleakness in the lives of Bengali women

doomed to live a life of illiteracy, ignorance, drudgery of household activities that included child rearing. Sita Devi was member of the group that organized the 'All India Women's Conference' which she made the platform to address issues like patriotism and women's enlightenment.

Ramanando did not neglect the education of his daughters. They received formal instruction in Bethune School. Eventually Sita Devi did her B. A. with honours in English in 1916. Informal education at home had started at Allahabad when she had avidly listened to the stories told to her by her mother. She was a voracious reader of English novels as well. Living in close affinity to Rabindranath, she developed finesse in appreciating Bangla literature. French literature too had its attractions for Sita Devi.

The story of 'Pathikbandhu', the novel that Sita Devi wrote revolves around the life of the hero Debopriyo Ray who is educated, intelligent, possesses the physique of an athlete and is a 'Young Bengal' at heart. The author exposes his character by revealing his surreptitious way of caring for his cousin Niroda, a married woman and victimized by her husband. Later as the plot unfolds, he accidentally stumbles upon Anindita, the heroine, when he takes his newly-wedded friend, Purnendu, to a studio to take photographs. Interestingly Purnendu had been in love (or so he had proclaimed) with Anindita before he succumbed to the sentimental pressure of his household to shun his 'noby shikshaye shikshito' beloved. Anindita is rudely shaken out of her painful stupor when she meets Purnendu and realizes how unsteady and faithless he had been. With Debopriyo's tender concern she is able to lift herself from the mire of jilted love, when she goes to the country house of her grandfather and meets Debopriyo who had also gone there to supervise his mother's family property. They gradually develop an attachment for each other and Anindita discovers the finer points in Debopriyo's character and both of them allow some time to pass before their love matures and they find unending happiness in marital bliss.

Authors like Sita Devi identified the issues that acted as weapons as women ventured to wield power. As early as the first two decades of the twentieth century Sita Devi highlighted the ill effects of the dowry system, early marriages, nightmarish situations that the fathers of young Bengali brides had to encounter. Being a Mary Wollstonecraft at heart, she urged women to educate themselves, to pursue careers, to be courageous enough to mouth long and loud protests. In her novels the heroines win victory in proclaiming equality between men and women. Through such a proclamation Sita Devi celebrates the evolution of the enlightened and educated 'bhadramahila' as the perfect and ideal woman of her dreams.

First-wave feminism is based upon a series of texts which constitute the canon of classical feminist theory. Influenced by Simone de Beauvoir's famous dictum that women are not born but made, these texts rapidly accumulated an entire range of descriptive, analytical and normative concepts

which have since become indispensable for serious analysts. The foundations for these orientations are based on the definition of women's emancipation, women's liberation and women's oppression. Such analysis is made from the perspective of the family. Descriptions of the structures of everyday life revealed that the family as an institution enacts a gendered division of labour, as it normatively relegates most women to the private sphere and most men to the public sphere. Feminist theorists pursued the extraordinarily unequal consequences for men and women resulting from the *normativities* of the public/private distinction. As long as women's natural social role remained restricted within the private sphere of family, her access to the public sphere of work remained minimal.

The dichotomy between the 'private' and the 'public' is the focal point for the early feminist critics in the context of the social organization of gender as a part of capitalist modernity. In India such worlds were sharply differentiated through the existence of the inner domain or 'antahpur' where women lived in seclusion. This concept was the major ingredient in the myth of the unsullied woman as the signifier of the morally superior Indian. However it is heartening to note that women writers in India sought to attack this myth from within. They saw their heroines as not placed upon a pedestal but as ordinary flesh and blood creatures with their virtues and shortcomings. Anindita, the heroine, in "Pathikbandhu" starts her life by making a wrong choice in selecting Purnendu — a happy-go-lucky man as her prospective husband. Little does she realize that he is a victim of traditional notions and lacks the integrity to relentlessly battle to win his beloved. In course of time, Anindita establishes a detached perspective so much so that she is able to see through the facade, admit her mistake and thinks of a remedy. Thus her character attains roundness and fullness. Pioneer women authors like Sita Devi, Santa Devi, Swarnakumari Devi and the ones belonging to the recent generation like Ashalata Singha, Ashapurna Devi, Protibha Basu and others strongly celebrate the women who have broken away from the four walls of their rooms and have spread their wings in the sky. They envisioned such resolute protagonists through the heroines in their fiction. The myth of Durga, the ten-armed goddess who came to the rescue of the gods is given a significant twist by Ashapurna Devi, who sees a reincarnation of the ten-armed goddess in the modern middle-class Indian women demolishing the barriers between the home and the world. In her inaugural speech delivered on 9th March 1989 at the Women's Studies Seminar, Jadavpur University, Ashapurna Devi expounds on the nature of illusory myth that surrounds the Indian woman :

Women have always been misled by this imposed ideal of womanhood. Be it her gentle manners and natural tenderness, or her lack of physical strength, she has always found herself hidden behind a mist of illusions, fenced in on all sides and forced away from the real world into the seclusion of a helpless and

dispossessed life. It is the unfair system that fostered the absurd notion—that she has no place in the world of work outside her home. Man is the maker of that world, and woman's duty is to make him a home.

Simultaneously she celebrates the emergence of the 'new woman'. It is education which finally enabled her to break free of her shackles. Ashapurna Devi calls the new woman 'Ma Dasabhuja, the Devi with ten arms to keep track of ten things at once'.

Through their autobiographies, we can hear the women speak, view issues from their perspective. As early as 1876 the first Bengali autobiography by a lady, Rassundari Devi, 'My Life' was published. True accounts can be gleaned from such closely personal points of view rather than from description by a nonchalant historian. Early marriage and early widowhood crippled the lives of young girls whose petals fell even before they had blossomed. At the beginning of 'Pathikbandhu' we meet a young wife, Niroda, who had a lousy husband that refused to bear the expenses of the household. The Hindu Law that prevailed in Bengal forbade women to have a right to own property. Women given away in marriages that were made without their consent, in early infancy, were ousted from the lineage they were born into and grafted onto the household of complete strangers — sometimes such strangers resented responsibility. The Dayabhaga system since the 16th century reduced the women's access to mere 'stridhan' or bridal gifts. They also did not have ownership rights over any form of property. They were people without incomes, more economically dependent on their families than labouring men. Almost all the young women in the novel from Niroda to Amola had to perform endless household chores and thus provided heavy unpaid and often unacknowledged labour at home. Within their families they were subjected to severe discipline and constraints on mobility. They provided service. And deference that was quite similar to those that low classes expressed towards their social superiors. It is the hero in "Pathikbandhu" that provides a critique of arrogant patriarchy when he remarks caustically that women accepted unquestionably the fact that they were born only to die and even if they lived they were to live ever without opening their lips and naturally when they died, they would soon pass into oblivion. Anindita's cousin Amola's failure to give birth to a child prompted her thoughtless husband to marry a second time and Amola was forced to leave her husband's house for good.

In the novel the hero's mother Haimobati is cast in the role of a matriarch though not a too powerful or oppressive one. The power that she wielded was mainly because she had inherited considerable property from her father and because her husband had died early. However for Anindita the quest for identity and true love is simplified mainly because she typifies the newly-enlightened Brahmo heroine. We have a glimpse of the 'antahpur' of her household which is the centre of her world. Typically her world is the world of the 'grihasta

bhadralok' belonging to the middle class. The 'antahpur' represented a separate community of women, subjected to male control through confinement in an enclosed space without access to the world outside. Though this is a fact strictly applicable to Haimobati and her vision, for Anindita, the situation undergoes a subtle change. She easily fits into the role of a 'bhadramahila' as its meaning crystallized into a term for an ideal type, embodying a specific set of qualities and denoting a certain lifestyle. The ideal 'bhadramahila' was a model Brahmo woman, as in the 1860s, the few women to break with orthodox custom in matters of education, dress, or discarding of purdah, were Brahmos. They were consciously welded into a body with a progressive image, and seen as pioneers of a new way of life to be adopted by other non-Brahmo women. Female education was championed by reformers because of a number of reasons and that did not encompass the cause of the 'bhadramahila' alone. Initially it was argued that an educated wife, rather than neglecting her duties, would make a much better housewife than her uneducated counterparts. There was another argument that existed in this context that education was necessary for the creation of an enlightened mother and thence of an enlightened race. The rainbow in the cloudy sky emerged when despite the utilitarian approach of male champions of female education, once women themselves were educated, they were able to say feelingly, that mothers should make sure their daughters were educated simply in order to make their lives much happier. It is this education coupled with her inherent wisdom that led Anindita to eventually forget Purnendu, her first love, who had jilted her because of family pressures and grasp Debopriyo's hand who had promised to stand by her through thick and thin.

Ideological Perceptions in 'Javni' : A Short Story by Raja Rao

ASOKA BHATTACHARYA

Raja Rao's short story 'Javni' focuses on a relatively unfocussed area of Indian society — the socio-economic positioning of the maid servant. Because her labour is not directly production related, economics does not recognise her as a labourer. And until very recently her political value as a vote bank had not been explored and so she was not recognised by politics either. She lives on the fringe of Indian society but keeps the home fire burning in every Indian home. Grossly underpaid, severely exploited, physically and emotionally abused, she is the cinderella of our society whom we love to use and loathe to own.

The name of the focal character which is also the title of the text is a grim giveaway. Javni is feminine for Javan - an untouchable, a person who bears the double cross of a Javan and a woman and this is buttressed by her class position. As the story unfolds we are made to enter the stark realities of Javni's life. Her parents were just moderately off but since she was a girl child and a lower caste one for that, she neither received education nor was taught any economically viable activity. So, when her husband, the washerman, dies of snake bite, her in-laws and her own brother turn her out because she is "a dirty widow (who) carries misfortune".² She has to earn her daily bread by her use — labour. In a country where the highest blessing a woman can receive is to die before her husband, where Savitri, Sita and Damayanti are the classic images of docility and surrender, Javni is looked upon as the necessary cause of her husband's death. Thus she leaves her domestic sphere and becomes a "domestic". The economic pattern behind her transformation of social status is a common Indian pattern where relatives are hungry for the share of the ancestral property. Javni is a mute, blunt, creature who lives her mundane existence without ever questioning its veracity. In fact, she enjoys her role as a good servant and takes to a new master as easily as a dog takes to one. The narrator takes up her life story at a point where it is already mired by problems of existence and leaves her at exactly the same point after a couple of years. Her life proceeds in a linear way and no fairy godmother enters to give her a break. What is astonishing is her silent but conspicuous complicity in her plight. This unquestioning almost reverential attitude to the mess that society has dished out to her, I intend to explain in terms of the Althusserian³ concept of ideology.

The system of caste relates very closely to the ongoing class position in society. It sees to it that, "social individuals must be reconciled both to the class structure and to the class position within it which, as individuals, they

occupy. They must be induced to live their exploitation and oppression in such a way that they do not experience or represent to themselves their position as precisely one in which they are exploited and oppressed.”³ This work is carried out by what Althusser calls the “ideological state apparatus” (ISA), religion, education, family etc. Ideology induces in those who are subjected to its action an imaginary relationship to the conditions of their existence. Javni is thoroughly reconciled to the class position where she is deprived, exploited and looted of the fruits of her labour. She is also reconciled to the caste system through which the upper crust of Indian society exercised their dominion over weaker sections of the populace. This system treats Javni and her kin as if they were not people, as if they were yet to join the human race. Such a system went on to eradicate any sense of self in the subject. This complete loss, complete erosion of selfhood got deeply ingrained in the affected person’s psyche and allowed him/her to comply tacitly in his/her own subjugation.

Javni’s case is a pointer to how the ISA is bound up with class structure as well as gender and subjectivity. Like Marx, Althusser also held that consciousness is constructed through Ideologies which offer systems of meaning and belief. These allow people to participate in their own subordination. Javni becomes a concrete social being as a subject of a determinate form of consciousness, through her surrender to the class structure in Indian pre-capitalist society and to her caste position within it.

Rao defines Javni’s space through a few masterstrokes. Her first entry into the text is significant. She stands “on the threshold afraid to come in”.⁴ The threshold is the specific space she occupies in society. So convinced is she of her space that she is literally ‘afraid’ to enter into the space of the mainstream, here the space of ‘I’ the narrator. The first address she receives is “Javni you monkey”⁵ and has to be coaxed to enter the threshold. When she does walk in, it is as if she is entering a temple. Further on her space becomes the wattle mat and finally she has no space left when her masters leave her on their way to a new place. Javni lacks the education to understand her world. Its place is taken by superstition, she literally sees ghosts. She also sees beauty in “the monstrous tap like nose and thick under lip”⁶ of the boy narrator – beauty of a regal and divine kind. This is due to her thorough internalizing of the myth of servitude in which our mythologies abound – servitude garbed as friendship, e.g. Hanuman, Bali and Guhak to name only a few. Like Pauline Breed in Toni Morrison’s. “The Bluest Eye” she also is zealously addicted to her role as the perfect servant. In her eagerness to prove her worth as a good servant, she reveals as it were the very pathology of servitude. “‘Why Ramappa’, cried Javni for the first time, There is nobody who can work for a Revenue Inspector’s family as I. You can go and ask everybody in the town, including every pariah if you like, and they will tell you, Javni, she is good like a cow and they will also add that there is no one who can serve a big man like the Revenue Inspector as Javni — as I.’ She

beat her breast with satisfaction. 'So you are the most faithful servant among the servants here!' I added a little awkwardly. 'Of course'! She cried proudly, her hands folded upon her knees, 'of course'!"⁷ It is in this role only that she can make sense of herself. In the process she becomes a willing conspirator in her own subordination and exploitation. She is the grossly under rated labourer, a victim of the pre-capitalist appropriation. Her labour specific to her class caste and gender is appropriated for a pittance. She earns an anna for a couple of days and a rupee a month. There is no profit whatsoever. Her labour is expropriated by her petty bourgeois masters but this only increases her dependency on them as also the social power they exert on her. In this way Javni is induced to "live" her exploitation and oppression but she never experiences it. She calls the mistress of the house mother, her brother is an incarnation of God himself, and the revenue inspector the most powerful and highly placed individual in her ward. She eats her inordinately scanty meal in the byre among defecating, urinating cows and that too in total darkness. This whole sequence might be called what Brecht termed a *gestus*.⁸

Javni's complicity in her socio-economic positioning is further consolidated "by the operations upon her of those material, ideological forms which result from autonomous ideological practices operating from within autonomous ideological apparatuses. ideology is an autonomous level of production with its own product : namely, the consciousness of human subjects".⁹ The particular form of ideology which makes Javni internalise her inferiorisation is religion. Religion not only cements her position at the bottom rung of the society but also coerces her consciousness into accepting her position. Any aspiration to move out of the circle demarcated for her is sacrilegious. That she is a servant is no matter to complain. But the fact that she is alive is due to the blessings of Tilakamma. That she receives her grossly underrated wage from good masters is also due to her grace. And so the shuddering picture of a woman eating among the dirt of cows has no human appeal to her.¹⁰ For her, "a Bahmin is not meant to work". They are "the chosen ones... The sacred books are yours. The Vedas are yours. You are all, you are all, you are the twice born, we are your servants, Ramappa – your slaves."¹¹ Ideology thus helps Javni and her like to adjust and reconcile themselves to the positions they occupy in the process of production according to Althusser.¹²

The other female character in the text, the narrator's sister, Sita, is also a case study of the workings of ideological apparatuses on the subject's consciousness. Just as Javni has internalised her inferiorisation, Sita has internalised her superiority and has posited herself in a position of binary opposition to Javni. The system of caste unleashing oppression on lower classes and conferring superiority on Sita and her class and caste is to her a historical process as it is to Javni. It has a sense, a direction and a meaning conferred on it by the "Absolute Subject" i.e. God. In Rao's text she holds the not so unique position in Indian society of the female exploiter. It is she who fixes

the rate of Javni's wage, it is she who makes the silent woman eat among dirt. And she has a ready answer to her inhuman behaviour when her brother, the narrator protests against her attitude to Javni – making her eat in the byre. She angrily retorts, "But affection does not ask you to be irreligious".¹³ And when asked what religion is, she blurts out automatically — "Irreligious, Irreligious. Well, eating with a woman of a lower caste is irreligious."¹⁴ Significant here is Sita's use of the word irreligious. She utters nonchalantly, without ever understanding the word itself, its meanings, connotations etc. She has legitimised and naturalised her own class position vis-a-vis that of Javni as a kind of commonsense. It thus requires no justification, it is self evidently true - "Irreligious, Irreligious". The hegemony of the upper class and caste male over lower rungs of society is kept intact through this commonsense view of culture which has likewise naturalised racial discrimination in the U.S. Sita does what is right according to some innate and unquestionable Absolute subject. This reinforces her social position and ensures the continuity of the class and caste system.

Ramappa, the boy narrator's Ideological position is the most queer. By birth he occupies the same ideological position that Sita does in matters of class and caste. But since he is receiving education of a bourgeois humanist kind he refuses to identify with it. He is the new up-coming petty bourgeois. He is politically correct because he identifies with the Gandhian doctrine of love and benevolence. But on a less obvious level he too is full of class and caste contempt which is disguised by impersonal benevolence. His attitude towards Javni is never one of empathy. It is the bourgeois humanist's scientific social enquiry that leads him to probe her life. But he consistently refuses to see his, the upper crust male Hindu's design in the continuity of the social law of motion. He invokes the stars and heavens to ameliorate grief and misery. He quotes the scriptures and reminds Lord Vishnu of his promise to return and uproot all evil. How passively he waits for this, "when will the day come, and when will the conch of knowledge blow"?¹⁵ The economic dimension of Javni's situation totally evades him. In so doing, Ramappa, inspite of all his sympathetic words and gestures participates in the privileging of his class and caste through inferiorisation of the other. He too helps the symbolic order remain intact.

So, the silence zone of Indian society remains silent. The scream beneath the silence never surfaces, never finds expression and the wheels of progress move on leaving those at the bottom live their inferiority down the ages.

Notes :

1. **Javani** was first published in Rao's collection of short stories *Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories*, Delhi, OUP, 1957. I have used the OUP collection of short stories *Twelve Modern Short Stories*. Delhi : OUP, 1983. Editor's name not stated. All quotations are from this edition.

2. Rao *op. cit.*, p. 180.
3. Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy*. London : New Left Books, 1971. Althusser's theories concerning ideology are outlined mainly in two essays – *Marxism and Humanism*, (1965) and *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, (1969). It is in the latter that we have the specific meaning it proposes for the concept of ideology. For him it is one particular form of cognition as the product of one particular type of signifying practice.
4. Rao *op. cit.*, p. 166.
5. *ibid* p. 167.
6. *ibid* p. 168.
7. *ibid* pp. 171-172.
8. John Willet in *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* says that Brecht's main concern in *Mother Courage and Her Children* is not with individual psychology but with social gestus. It meant both gist and gesture an attitude or a single aspect of an attitude expressible in words or in actions. Roland Barthes clarifies in *Image, Music, Text* that it is a gesture or a whole set of gestures in which a whole social situation can be read.
9. Bennett, Tony. *Marxism and Formalism*. London : Routledge, 1979. p. 114.
10. Rao *op. cit.*, p. 174.
11. *ibid* p. 183.
12. Althusser *op. cit.* p. 206.
13. Rao *op. cit.*, p. 174.
14. *ibid* p. 174.
15. *ibid* p. 175.

Identity Politics in the Harlem Renaissance

ASLI TEKINAY

The Harlem Renaissance was a period of artistic explosion with cores in various black ideologies. In no sense a unified movement, the renaissance was a cradle of intellectual controversies regarding black identity which in turn determined the content and form black art would assume. In literature, just as in music, dance, and visual arts, the black men of letters created their unique styles and contributed to a wide spectrum whose lack of uniformity gave the Harlem Renaissance an exceptional vitality while at the same time depriving it of a socially beneficial component in the sense that a political clout could have been born out of a uniform black voice.

The roots of diversity which lie in the existence of various different strains of black thought that contributed to the new black consciousness of the period find their reflections in contemporary discussions about identity politics. Whether cultural identity is determined genealogically or socially is a central issue because essentialist or anti-essentialist stances play important roles in the context of culture criticism and multiculturalism: if cultural identity is formed by socially learned behaviour or experience, then ethnic groups within a macro-culture are bound to be assimilated; if, on the other hand, cultural identity is formed by heritage, then it fosters the view of race-centered cultural identity.

These two polar approaches to the formation of cultural identity are closely analyzed by Walter Benn Michaels in *Race into Culture : A Critical Genealogy of Cultural Identity*. Michaels opts for an essentialist position regarding cultural identity, disagreeing with Arthur Schlesinger's rigidly anti-essentialist viewpoint. In *The Disuniting of America*, Schlesinger sets out to prove that race consciousness and group pride are artificial constructs created to "strengthen a sense of identity and self-respect among nonwhite people" (1992:14). In asserting his view that black people can have no cultural identity other than their Americanness, Schlesinger desperately tries to disavow what he calls the "ethnic interpretation which reverses the historic theory of America as one people" (1992:16). According to Schlesinger, "the multiethnic dogma abandons historic purposes, replacing assimilation by fragmentation, integration by separatism; it belittles *unum* and glorifies *pluribus*" (1992:17). This conservative view was supported by Melville J. Herskovits, the author of *The Negro's Americanism*, published in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* in 1925. According to Herskovits, the Negro has no genuine cultural identity; totally assimilated into the American culture, the Negro was no different from other ethnic minorities. For Herskovits, racial identity plays no role in the constitution of cultural identity, which is formed by socially learned behaviour. In his later book, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941) Herskovits claims that the myth of the Negro's unique cultural endowment is solely a function of racial prejudice.

This is in line with George Schuyler's argument in *The Negro-Art Hokum* that "the Aframerican is merely lampblack Anglo-Saxon....he reveals the psychology and culture of his environment - his color is incidental" (Schuyler, 1995 : 97, 98).

Walter Benn Michaels is at the other end of the spectrum, regarding cultural identity. According to Michaels, "culture has turned out to be a way of continuing rather than repudiating racial thought and our race identifies the culture to which we have a right" (1992 : 684, 685). Michael cites Countee Cullen's *Heritage* as a poem which defines cultural identity genealogically, finding it in the body's *black blood*. *What is Africa to me?* – Cullen's famous question is answered in a subtle manner by the poet. It is a repressed force that may prove to be more powerful than the Negro's Americanization :

So I lie, who always hear,
Though I cram against my ear
Both my thumbs, and keep them there,
Great drums throbbing through the air.

Ancestral Africa – the black man's past –, as a throbbing force in his dark blood, defines his cultural identity.

Michaels' claim that identity is always essentialist is challenged by Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield in *White Philosophy*. According to Gordon and Newfield, such a clearly essentialist stance not only "reproduces a color line in cultural studies" but also negates cultural individualism (1994 : 744). "As antiessentialism says only that we should not derive what we do from who we are in the sense in which who we are is logically prior to and undetermined by what we do, antiessentialism becomes the vanguard of individualism which allows us to ignore that what we do or who we are is always imposed and chosen within determinate social relations" (1994 : 743). As Gordon and Newfield maintain, cultural theory in the past decade has "rendered the use of individual and group identity fully antiessentialist and social emphasizing the variable, indeterminate, shifting boundaries of any group identity" (1994 : 744). According to this view, then, in order to allow room for cultural individualism, the ground must be removed as far away from a conservative, assimilationist, melting-pot approach to cultural identity as from racial ontology.

Looking back from today's point of view, the diversity in the literary output of the Harlem Renaissance anticipates the current ideological dichotomy about cultural identity. Representing an initial but immensely fruitful stage in African-American writing, the tremendous diversity of the literature and criticism of the renaissance underlies the complexity of the black identity.

In *Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance*, Cary Wintz points out that

It [Harlem] reflected the confusing and
contradictory position of blacks in the early

twentieth century. It was a symbol of the black migrant who left the South and went North with dreams of freedom and opportunity. It also symbolized the shattered pieces of those dreams which lay half-buried beneath the filth and garbage of the city slum. Harlem reflected the self-confidence, militancy and pride of the New Negro in his or her demand for equality; it reflected the aspirations and genius of the writers and poets of the Harlem renaissance; but Harlem, like the black migrant, like the New Negro, and like the Renaissance writers, did not resolve its problems or fulfill its dreams (1988 : 29).

Indeed, the explosion of the renaissance, so great and sudden, led to such different places that its essential problems remained unresolved. The nature of black identity and the place and function of art (in a period which was concerned with cultural and racial issues above all others) constituted the basis of intellectual controversies. In the most simplified terms, two basic ideologies clashed. One asserted that the black people, not remembering their African past and born in America, are part of the American culture. Their color should not matter. Their cultural sameness is to be emphasized in order to facilitate their integration into the American social system. This assimilationist stance roughly anticipates the current conservative antiessentialist outlooks of people like Arthur Schlesinger. A recessive vein in the Harlem Renaissance, this ideology was propagated by the most popular black leader at the turn of the century, Booker T. Washington. An influential leader, Washington's *accommodationist* philosophy was that for blacks to earn their constitutional rights, they had to learn trade and acquire practical skills to compete with whites in the economic arena and to adhere to Christian morality. In his famous Atlanta speech Washington said:

In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly" (1975 : 585).

At a time when the black man was regarded as symbolic of *otherness* by the white culture, Washington chose to cover or suppress that *otherness* and emphasize *sameness*. In Amiri Baraka's words, Booker T. Washington "submits to American 'needs', which were that Blacks submit and be submissive" (1981 : 146).

This accommodationist ideology was severely attacked by DuBois' protest philosophy which was the strongest alternative to Washington's. Impatient with

the latter's view of the quest for desegregation and the vote as futile, Du Bois called for racial solidarity and black art to serve an ultimate goal: to protest disenfranchisement and segregation and to win the struggle for civil rights. Removed from the intellectual sophistication and complexity of Du Bois' views regarding Black identity, the Jamaican leader Marcus Garvey's *pan-Africanism* can nevertheless be seen as a radical form of protest militancy. Garvey's goal to unite the 400 million black people in the world in order to liberate not only the African-Americans but also the Africans who were suffering under colonial rule may have been utopic; yet, his philosophy clearly signaled the emergence of a black cultural consciousness. His calls for black pride and black power and his identification with Africa did find their reflections in the literature of the Harlem Renaissance. This new *Black is beautiful* consciousness, coupled with the emphasis put on the African heritage and culture of the black people, anticipates current essentialist approaches to cultural identity.

Though *Afrocentricity* is a new term, its roots are surely to be found in the essentialist philosophy of the Harlem Renaissance. According to Molefi Asante, "without Afrocentricity, African-Americans would not have a voice to add to multiculturalism" (1991 : 21). Approaching Afrocentricity as an *idea* of empowerment through engaging a world view that confronts and challenges European-dominated thinking, as Katrina Hazzard-Gordon maintains, we can detect in the literature and criticism of the Renaissance the sparks that may have been its inspiration (1991 : 21). According to Robert Harris.

African Americans created a distinctive culture in the United States based, in large measure on their African heritage. An Afrocentric perspective enables us to recognize and understand that culture from the inside out, rather than from outside in. It thereby reveals a tradition in African-American letters, for example, that moves black literature beyond "protest writing", a characterization some white critics employ to dismiss its significance (1991 : 26).

Harris, emphasizing the possibility of approaching cultural identity from two sides, from the inside out or from the outside in, underlines the essential problematics encountered by the black artists in the Harlem Renaissance. This dichotomy is the core of one of the basic intellectual controversies of the renaissance : proper cultural expression versus authentic cultural expression. The former is an end result of perceiving cultural identity from outside in; whereas, the latter is a journey from the inside out. In the 1990's, Afrocentricity can recognize the African-American culture from the inside out. In the 1920's however, this was a luxury that black artists and men of letters found very difficult to afford:

..... the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, –an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, –this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost (DuBois, 1988 : 3).

Thus, the double bind in which the black artists found themselves stemmed from the social and cultural responsibility they were asked to carry. Did the black artist have the liberty to express himself freely? The answer was negative for the black artist, unlike his white colleagues, was treated as the spokesman of his culture. Finding themselves in such a position, many black artists poured their artistic energies into the creation of a “proper” cultural identity for the African-American people—*proper*, in the sense of *white* or *simply American*. Richard Wright in *Blueprint for Negro Writing*, associates the so-called “proper cultural expression with the desire to be integrated into the macro-culture:

Generally speaking, Negro writing in the past has been confined to humble novels, poems, and plays, prim and decorous ambassadors who went a-begging to white America. They entered the Court of American Public Opinion dressed in the knee-pants of servility, curtsying to show that the Negro was not inferior, that he was human, and that he had a life comparable to that of other people. For the most part these artistic ambassadors were received as though they were French poodles who do clever tricks (1991 : 195).

Wright borrows from Lenin the idea that “oppressed minorities.....strive to assimilate the virtues of the bourgeoisie in the assumption that by doing so they lift themselves into a higher social sphere” and applies to it black art aimed at *proper* cultural portrayal (Wright, 1995 : 195).

The issue of proper versus authentic cultural expression, loosely linked to American versus African cultural identity, is also related to anti-essentialist versus essentialist perspectives in identity formation. And this issue gained importance in black literary criticism of the Renaissance. Claude McKay's novel *Home to Harlem* attracted negative criticism from black writers who were sensitive about the portrayal of their race and did not like the novel's depiction of blacks. McKay in this novel had established Harlem as a carnal jungle and shown the black man as the unrestrained child of civilization, with erotic images chosen from the unrepressed African culture. McKay's vision of the black intellectual as social misfit and his aesthetic retreat into African primitivism was against the wishes of the black critics who wanted to see in black fiction a picture of middle-class respectability. Du Bois' angry comments on McKay's novel were representative of the feelings of conservative blacks who wanted black novels to present the politely polished and cultured aspects of black people and thus to 'serve as a vehicle for social amelioration:

Home to Harlem for the most part nauseates me
.... It looks 'as though McKay has set out to cater to
that prurient demand on the part of white folk for
a portrayal in Negroes of that utter licentiousness
which convention holds white folk-back from
enjoying (DuBois : 1995, 131).

Feeling that black writers were compelled to serve their culture with their writings by rendering an idealized black experience, Du Bois severely criticised McKay for not providing the reading public with a celebration of blacks.

While accusing McKay's *Home to Harlem* and Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* for their exposure of the seamy side of Harlem, rather than concentrating on the respectable elements of the black community, Du Bois and the conservative circle applauded the two women novelists of the renaissance – Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen, – who offered an idealized version of the black experience. William Braithwaite, praising Fauset's first novel, implicitly reveals his anti-essentialist stance in the formation of cultural identity:

Miss Fauset in her novel *There is Confusion* has
created an entirely new milieu in the treatment of
the race in fiction. She has taken a class within
the race, given it an established social standing,
tradition, culture and shown that its predilections
are very much like those of any civilized group of
human beings (Sato, 1972 : 67).

Both Fauset and Larsen, while emphasizing in their fiction an emerging black middle class concerned with propriety, morality and upward mobility, were oblivious to its *primitive* underside, that brought McKay and Van Vechten such severe criticism.

Du Bois' *Criteria of Negro Art* is a warning for black artists. Stating that "all art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists", Du Bois argues that "the white public demands from its artists, literary and pictorial, racial pre-judgment which deliberately distorts truth and justice, as far as colored races are concerned, and it will pay for no other" (1995 : 104). The limitations imposed upon the artist by Du Bois are rejected by Langston Hughes' *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain* which marks the peak of the Harlem Renaissance and in retrospect serves as its artistic manifesto :

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on the top of the mountain free from within ourselves (1995 : 95).

Hughes makes an appeal to an *honest American Negro literature* despite the opposition of what he calls the *Nordicized Negro intelligentsia*. As a writer, Hughes rejected all restrictions and limitations upon his art; he felt the black artist had to be free to render his own vision of black reality and identity. Hughes believed that if black literature is to be worthwhile, it should not be subservient to any dogma or ideology; it should not try to comply with the expectations of either the whites or the blacks. As a black realist, he rejected the instrumental use of art for race propaganda or for assimilation. Artistic expression had to be authentic.

Hughes manifests his essentialist stance as he talks about the impossibility of the African-American artists of achieving a cultural identity which is divorced from their racial identity :

One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once, 'I want to be a poet, not a Negro poet', meaning, I believe, 'I want to write like a white poet'; meaning subconsciously; 'I would like to be a white poet; meaning behind that, 'I would like to be white.' And I was sorry the young man said that, for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself. And I doubted then that, with his desire to run away spiritually from his race, this boy would ever be a great poet. But this is the mountain standing in the way of any true

Negro art in America... this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible (1995 : 91).

Hughes' line of thought is parallel to Walter Benn Michaels' in *Race into Culture : A Critical Genealogy of Cultural Identity* : if our race identifies the culture to which we have a right, as Michaels maintains, then a black artist should be part of black culture. In that case, then, he is deprived of the freedom to impose his individuality. Hughes' black poet cannot be a great poet in an "alien culture".

Like Hughes, Albert Barnes in *Negro Art and America* advocates authentic cultural expression :

That there should have developed a distinctively Negro art in America was natural and inevitable. A primitive race, transported into an Anglo-Saxon environment and held in subjection to that fundamentally alien influence, was bound to undergo the soul-stirring experiences which always find their expression in great art (1995 : 129).

Barnes clearly anticipates an essentialist perspective in the constitution of identity, which is formed genealogically, not socially :

The Negro is a poet by birth. In the masses, that poetry expresses itself in religion which acquires a distinction by extraordinary fervor, by simple and picturesque rituals and by a surrender to emotion so complete that ecstasy, amounting to automatisms, is the rule when he worships in groups Poetry is religion brought down to earth and it is of the essence of the Negro soul. He carries it with him always and everywhere; he lives it in the field, the shop, the factory. His daily habits of thought, speech, and movement are flavored with the picturesque, the rhythmic, the euphonious (1995 : 129).

The cultural *difference* of the African-American was no longer to be suppressed. Unlike the initial phase, the last phase of the Renaissance was marked by its candid fervor in the declaration of this difference. As he was preparing to leave the editorship of *Opportunity*, Charles Johnson announced that the Renaissance artists were now less "self-conscious, less interested in proving that they are just like white people... Relief from the stifling consciousness

of being a problem has brought a certain superiority to the Renaissance” (qtd. Lewis, 1995 : xxxiii). In a more radical fashion, editor Thurman, in the new magazine *Harlem*, asserted that “the time has now come when the Negro artist can be his true self and pander to the stupidities of no one, either white or black” (qtd. Lewis, 1995 : xxxiii).

Richard Wright is deeply perceptive of a unique African-American cultural identity marked by its differences from what we may term as a Eurocentric (white) American identity :

There is, however, a culture of the Negro
which is his and has been addressed to him; a
culture which has, for good or ill, helped to clarify
his consciousness and create emotional attitudes
which are conducive to action. This culture has
stemmed mainly from two sources : 1) the Negro
church; 2) and the folklore of the Negro people

...

One would have thought that Negro writers in the
last century of striving at expression would have
continued and deepened this folk tradition, would
have tried to create a more intimate and yet a
more profoundly social system of artistic
communication between them and their people.
But the illusion that they could escape through
individual achievement the harsh lot of their race
swung Negro writers away from any such path. Two
separate cultures sprang up : one for the Negro
masses, unwritten and unrecognized; and the
other for the sons and daughters of a rising Negro
bourgeoisie, parasitic and mannered (1995 : 197).

Thus, Wright draws the distinction between authentic and proper cultural expression. Apart from Negro folklore which contains the “collective sense of Negro life in America, there is an absence of fixed and nourishing forms of culture for the black men” (1995 : 198). In other words, Wright denounces the presence of a valid macro-culture for the African-American : he identifies “black chauvinism as not a morbidly inherent trait of the Negro, but rather the reflex expression of a life whose roots are imbedded deeply in Southern soil” (1995 : 199).

What Wright calls *black nationalism* is a form of authentic cultural identity; “a nationalist spirit in Negro writing means a nationalism carrying the highest possible pitch of social consciousness. It means a nationalism that knows its origins, its limitations; that is aware of the dangers of its position; that knows its ultimate aims are realizable within the framework of capitalist

America; a nationalism whose reason for being lies in the simple fact of self-possession and in the consciousness of the interdependence of people in modern society" (1995 : 199).

Wright's call for a liberated/authentic expression of the nourishing culture from which they [blacks] were torn in Africa was not really answered by the Renaissance writers; Du Bois' historic description of the black American mind may account for the failure or inadequacy of the Renaissance writers who were hindered from offering a satisfactory assessment of the African-American's cultural identity. Gloria Naylor in *Love and Sex in the Afro-American Novel*, focuses on one aspect of the *double-consciousness* which was at play during the Harlem Renaissance : the restriction of black female sexuality. For instance, women protagonists in Jesse Fauset's *There is Confusion* and Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* give only subtle suggestions of wanting to defy convention and fully realize both their sexual and professional needs, and they finally opt for the safe confines of marriage (Naylor, 1988 : 23). According to Naylor, "even Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which has been lauded by the feminist community as a revolutionary breakthrough for its time, displays the same restraint" (1988 : 23). Like the heterosexual black woman, the homosexual black man, too, was the victim of a double consciousness in the sense that his Americanness intimidated his blackness and thus, either fear or shame held these early black voices of the Renaissance back from full creative expression of their true selves.

Approaches to racial and/or cultural identity have undergone significant transformations since the time of the Harlem Renaissance. Richard Wright said that *the Negro is America's metaphor* and identified race as a yardstick for accessing meanings about twentieth-century America. Du Bois exposed the issue of the *colour line* as the central problem of the twentieth century and suggested that race as a sociocultural construct was the battleground for the delineation of a modern self within society. Like Du Bois, Edward Blyden made race the *principal motor of history*. Today, though the terminology has shifted from race to ethnicity and culture, it is through their theories that strict racial theory is transformed into a *subtler and more egalitarian theory of cultural pluralism*.

The rich diversity that identity politics nurtured in the Harlem Renaissance has put the foundations to twentieth century culture criticism. Werner Sollors, in *The Invention of Ethnicity*, quotes the highly acclaimed novelist of the renaissance, Charles W. Chestnutt. In a speech in 1905, Chestnutt says :

It seems to me a modern invention of the
white people to perpetuate the color line.
It is they who preach it, and it is their racial
integrity which they wish to preserve : they
have never been unduly careful of the purity of

the black race Why should a man be proud
any more than he should be ashamed of a thing
for which he is not all responsible ?... Are we to
help the white people to build up walls between
themselves and us to fence in a gloomy backyard
for our descendents to play in ?

(qtd. Sollors : 1989 XVII).

Asserting that the forces of modern life embodied by such terms as 'ethnicity', 'nationalism', or 'race' can indeed be meaningfully discussed as 'inventions', Sollors points to the general cultural constructedness of the modern world. Thus, Sollors' vision throws light upon the possibility of the coexistence of interactive cultures. Maintaining that "it is not any a priori cultural difference that makes ethnicity....[but] the specificity of power relations at a given historical moment and in a particular place that triggers off a strategy of pseudo-historical explanations that camouflage the inventive act itself," Sollors argues against all types of ethnocentrism which manifest themselves as racism (1989 : XVI).

To achieve a sense of a true multicultural democracy in America necessitates the recognition of the interrelatedness of all cultural groups which the country is comprised of. As W.J. Cash writes in *The Mind of the South*, it is not realistic to conceive of the two largest cultural groups in the US as distinct from one another : "Negro entered into white man as profoundly as white man entered into Negro – subtly influencing every gesture, every word, every emotion and idea, every attitude".

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Hybridity and Transformation: The Art of Lin Onus

BILL ASHCROFT

Lin Onus, who died prematurely in 1996, is an Aboriginal painter who focusses the most pressing debates affecting contemporary Aboriginal art: Hybridity vs. Authenticity; Aboriginality vs. Australianess; High vs. Popular art and I would throw in one of my own — Oppositionality vs. Transformation. There are few artists, with the exception of Gordon Bennett and Tracy Moffatt, who focus so acutely the cultural task of the contemporary Aboriginal painter. His penchant for blurring boundaries — mixing humour and resistance, confusing ideas of High and Low culture, extruding the traditional through the contemporary — characterizes the effectiveness of his political work. For these reasons he has most often been framed by the discourse of postmodernism. But I want to suggest that Lin Onus deploys strategies that are fundamental to the post-colonial engagement with dominant discourse.

The postmodern interpretation of Onus' work is an attractive one since he so manifestly transgresses received assumptions and conventions, and most obviously, received *expectations* of Aboriginal art. If Lin Onus' work is postmodern, we must re-define postmodernism. Not that this is such an unusual exercise. Get any two academics together and you will have three definitions of postmodernism. Besides, there is a strong argument to be made against the assumption of Australian 'belatedness' in cultural production (see Ashcroft and Salter 2000). But in indigenous art, we find a particular cultural and political transformation of dominant forms, which runs the risk of being swallowed up by universal categories such as postmodernism. I want to read the text of Lin Onus' painting to demonstrate its affinity with the transformative resistance projects of post-colonial production. It is this transformative power that might intervene in discussions of reconciliation. I am not underestimating the complexity of Australian post-coloniality in this, by proposing a simple-minded binary of white colonizers and black colonized. Lin Onus himself puts paid to this reductionism. Colonialism positions its subjects. As a discourse of power it operates through them, rather than simply on them. Lin Onus reveals both the complexity and hybridity of post-colonial resistance.

Hybridity has become a dirty word in contemporary cultural discussion. Popularized by Homi Bhabha, it has been criticized for its suggestion that cross-cultural exchange occurs on a level political field rather than one characterised by great inequalities of power. Robert Young argues that it was a popular term in imperialist discourse and accompanied conscious assimilationist strategies (1995). But more often it carried the connotation of impurity and inauthenticity that has carried over into contemporary opposition to the term. Margot Neale, for instance, assumes that the description 'hybrid' devalues Lin Onus' work.

While the concept can lead to a dangerous levelling out of cultural power, hybridity is still an important feature of post-colonial attempts to disrupt colonial binaries.

Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space which he calls the "Third Space of enunciation" (1994: 37). Cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space, which for Bhabha makes the claim to a hierarchical 'purity' of cultures untenable. For him, the recognition of this ambivalent space of cultural identity may help us overcome the exoticism of 'cultural diversity' in favour of the recognition of an empowering hybridity within which cultural difference may operate:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory ...may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. (1994: 38)

It is the 'in-between' space which carries the burden and meaning of culture and this is what makes the notion of hybridity so important. It is not so much valuable in itself as it is for unsettling *all* static and inflexible notions of identity and authenticity.

I want to propose the hybrid *process* of Lin Onus' work as a way of investigating the concept of reconciliation that has dominated recent discussion of indigenous relations. When reconciliation becomes a verb to what or with whom, are we to reconcile? Should we reconcile ourselves to power relations? When we put it this way we see that reconciliation is not only an incomplete project but an *uncompletable* project. When shall we be finally reconciled? In the Australian context, will reconciliation come with a Treaty? Will it come with the recognition of land rights or will it come when all unalienated land is transferred to its original owners? And what then of those who have no land? Clearly, we need a concept of reconciliation as a process of transformation, and this is where Lin Onus' work becomes most significant.

Lin Onus offers the prospect of a reconciliation that comes about through transculturation, and a transculturation of a particular kind — one that operates intra-textually rather than between two cultures and their textual representations. This intra-textual transculturation disrupts anachronistic and disempowering notions of authenticity. Ideas of authenticity lead to the very frustrating paradox of Aboriginality in which contemporary artists such as Onus, Bennett and Moffatt find themselves. Are they Aboriginal or Australian, Aboriginal-Australian or Australian-Aboriginal? The stereotypes of authenticity have persistently undermined the work of contemporary Aboriginal artists. For example, Bernard Luthi notes that, "Selectors in 1994 and again in 1998

persistently resisted the inclusion of Aboriginal art in the Cologne Contemporary Art Fair. Aboriginal art from urban areas is deemed to be by artists 'following a tradition' and therefore not 'authentic', while Aboriginal art from Arnhem Land is too culturally authentic to qualify as contemporary art" (*Urban Dingo* 53). Sydney-based Bandjalung artist Bronwyn Bancroft comments in her work *You don't even look Aboriginal* (1991) : "For years we were punished for being black and now we are punished for not being black enough" (15). "This westernized, overtly political art continues to be written off as either Aboriginal kitsch or a sophisticated fabrication – a simulation of Aboriginality" (17).

On the face of it, the artists themselves often seem to contribute to this confusion. Onus' work is filled with searing images of Aboriginal resistance yet, along with Tracy Moffatt, he railed against the refusal by the art Establishment to accept them as Australian artists. "For those of the 1970s", he wrote, "the only perceived path was the European model.... To introduce any element of Aboriginal art into one's work would have rendered it both unfashionable and unsaleable" (43). Onus' strategy was what McLean calls indigenous postmodernism: he became a *bricoleur*.

But there is a sense in which all art is bricolage. To call Onus a postmodern *bricoleur* says little in the long run. It names the form without identifying the substance. Onus himself calls his painting habits those of a bowerbird - picking up bits and pieces here and there, appropriating whatever is available for his work. The term 'postmodern' closes down a reading. It identifies techniques without attending to the political and cultural task to which they are put. And in so doing, the postmodern label absorbs Onus' work, as it absorbs the work of all post-colonial artists, into a Universalist and globalist paradigm, leaching their art of cultural specificity.

The paradox of the Aboriginal *bricoleur* is resolved by a strategy I call 'interpolation'. By interpolating the dominant discourse, and, consequently, the dominant market, the aboriginal painter can offer a representation of Aboriginality that becomes widely disseminated. In effect, the market is appropriated for the purposes of cultural resistance. Aboriginality interpolates the discourse of Australia on its own terms. Operating within the Third Space of Enunciation – the hybrid, disruptive, appropriating space of the contemporary Aboriginal artist – the dominant discourse is transformed. In the process the boundaries generated by the dominant form are reconfigured – boundaries between High and Popular culture, Aboriginal and Australia art, boundaries of culture and identity - in short, the boundaries of definition and authenticity.

One interesting consequence of this boundary-breaking is the difficulty it offers for structuring a conversation about the artist. No matter what topic we want to discuss, any painting we use to demonstrate this will always be

traversed by a dozen others. But Lin Onus is always, in one way or another, talking about time and space, or specifically, Place and History. Within these discourses the issues of representation, dispossession, cultural displacement, marginality, mimicry, 'writing back' to the canon can all be found to traverse individual paintings, and the issues themselves can become the subjects of Onus' particular brand of satiric and irreverent humour.

One of the most important strategies of post-colonial transformation is the control of self-representation. Underlying all economic, political and social resistance is the struggle over representation that occurs in language, writing and other forms of cultural production. So powerful is the effect of colonial representation, that it can become, as Said forcefully demonstrates in *Orientalism*, the way in which the colonized see themselves, and this can effect all social and political interchange. Orientalism remains the classic instance of this discursive construction, but such a tendency can occur in the representation of Aboriginality through art, where only dot paintings, may be considered authentic, despite their use of enamel paints and fine brushes. This is just one aspect of a discourse of exclusion, which nominates only certain forms of social and cultural action and only certain forms of identity as indigenous.

The issue of representation is therefore absolutely central to Onus' work and a prime example of this can be found in the painting **'Twice Upon a Time'** (1992). The key feature of the painter's particular form of transformative resistance is one I would call the 'meta-representational.' His representations, particularly his representations of place, are about the *process* of representation itself. His 'seeing' of place is always an investigation of seeing or at least a disruption of our seeing to uncover that ideology to which it is giving form. This is precisely what makes his hybridity transformative: it is multi-dimensional, operating as a constant field of interrogation. In order to take control of representation he reveals the extent to which the conventions of seeing have been naturalized.

Onus grew up surrounded by his grandfather's music and fine art including a much-loved painting by Eugène von Guérard.

An early work — **Once Upon a Time** — is subtitled **'Homage to Eugène von Guérard'** and it converses with von Guérard in an Arcadian view of the Australian bush. His painting **Twice Upon a Time** also 'writes back' to von Guérard in a mimicry so tranquil that it seems completely to lack the 'menace' Bhabha saw central to colonial mimicry. The painting seems to reproduce too lovingly the conventions of colonial representation. But it is the meta-representational aspect of the painting that provides the 'menace' of disruption and subversiveness.

The painting is a palimpsest in which the visual reproduction is laid over another representation of the surface of geometrically carved trees. The painting

represents the contest between the power of western ocularcentrism and the inscription of Aboriginal art upon the surface of the text of place. The single strand of barbed wire signifies the further inscription of colonial occupation, the bounding and fencing of place as property. The fence, being barbed wire, carries the connotation of more than enclosure. It is a signifier also of imprisonment. The palimpsest of the painting inscribes not only a spatial history, but also a gradation of modes of representation, modes of seeing and being in place.

The meta-representational function of Onus' art is demonstrated in a different palimpsest in **Jimmy's Billabong** (1988). Over the picturesque visual representation of Jimmy's Billabong is the striped covering of *rarrk* cross-hatching, designs that signify clan affiliation. "The *rarrk* overlay can be interpreted as a process of indigenizing the Other, of claiming custodianship of the land, and of subverting the primacy of Western systems of representation" (Neale 2000: 16). These *rarrk* patterns were important to Onus who set up a *Book of rarrk* with Michael Eather. As with the former painting, *Twice Upon a Time*, the meta-representational contest is between the visual, ocularcentric history of Western representation and the embodied construction of Aboriginal place.

From 1986 until his death in 1996 Onus made sixteen 'spiritual pilgrimages' to Arnhem Land. These enabled him to fill his in-between space, his 'Third Space of Enunciation' with a diverse array of techniques, and a diverse array of points of view which underlie his genius for dismantling the processes of seeing. Introduced to his own ancestral site at the Barmah Forest, Onus engages the place with the full force of his transformative and meta-representational vision. The painting *Barmah Forest* (1994) is a strikingly simple subversion of the landscape techniques on which the painting itself capitalizes. The ambivalence of place, and the perception of western styles of seeing as themselves a screen over ancestral space, is demonstrated by the jigsaw pieces taken out of the painting. Seeing itself, as it is represented in the painting, is a jigsaw that can be too easily disrupted by the removal of a couple of pieces. Significantly the pieces themselves do not fit, suggesting that the jigsaw of visual representation is a tenuous and provisional one that overlays other forms of seeing.

Using the jigsaw motif he painted *Arafura Swamp* (1990). (Plate-1). The realist western landscape style is punctuated with cutouts through which one could view a traditional bark painting continuing below. The painting represents the reinscription and interpenetration of Aboriginal and Western forms of representation. Onus uses 'the traditional idiom of perceptual art in the landscape tradition' with 'fish, frogs and animals painted in aboriginal conventions, the X-ray bones and abstract patterns of bark painting.' The bricolage technique gives a new dimension to the concept of the hybrid. For

in the conventions of landscape painting. But the painting describes in simple visual form the imaginative and social effects of the principle of enclosure, so fundamental to Western views of place. The painting provides a very simple but effective interrogation of the cultural bases of Western habitation.

The pollution of civilization is the obvious message of *Balanda Rock Art* (1989). But it is a playful variation on the contest between visual representation and *rarrk* inscription in so many of the paintings. Here the Aboriginal process of painting on the land, of inscribing the surface text of place, is reversed. The inscription is the graffiti of those for whom the bush as a place of belonging is virtually meaningless. Embedded in this unsubtle message is the idea of Aboriginal place as a *tabula rasa* defaced by white occupation, or, perhaps more critically, defaced by modernity itself.

The Search for Place

The hybridity of Koori art is often shown in the conflation of the Western visual representation and symbolic pattern of traditional aboriginal art. The painting: *Mum, when do we get there?* (1989), conflates time and place, and in a way similar to the cover of Sally Morgan's *My Place*. Here, the red truck on the snaking serpent-like track immediately raises the question 'Where are we going?' The hand holding the map gives both the authorized form of mapping and the one that will never get to where the Aboriginal people want to go.

Animals as signs of Aboriginality

Wax dogs on Lake Eyre for instance (1989). On his journeys north Onus passed Lake Eyre where he encountered the dingo, an animal for which he developed a powerful affinity. For Onus, the animal was not the demeaned dingo of recent history, hunted for its scalp and fenced off from its native hunting grounds. The dingo in the paintings is a survivor, an animal of supreme adaptability; a figure for Aboriginal subjects themselves in their oneness with the land. He politicizes the figures with red black and yellow football jumpers – the club colours of the marginalised occupants of the country. The stripes of the club colours echo the bands of the *rarrk* with which he appropriated his paintings of landscape to an aboriginal world. According to Neale, they also suggest the markings of the thylacine finally extinct in 1936.

The picture of the dingoes on Lake Eyre is particularly significant because it is this landscape that seemed to several colonial artists, to symbolize the dystopian threat of 'Australian place.

In 1990 the dingo joined with a fellow traveller in the stingray and the adventures of x and ray have formed an enduring comic myth in Onus' work. Onus adapted the role of the stingray from Michel Eather for whom an association with Arnhem Land made the ray one metaphor for Aboriginal subjectivity. As a play on the x-ray style of aboriginal body marking, these two characters engage in an almost picaresque narrative that penetrates many areas of post-colonial interest with humour and verve. One of the best known

the painting is not simply a pattern of different forms but a dialectic of different ways of seeing.



Arafura Swamp Plate-1.

The philosophy and practice of enclosure and its capacity to shut off an experience of the land is revealed in *Fences, Fences, Fences* (1985) . (Plate-2) .



Fences, Fences, Fences, Plate-2.

There is a deep ambivalence here, as if the fence prevents the viewer from truly experiencing 'what is there' when 'what is there' is represented

is *Michael and I are just slipping down to the pub for a minute*. This parodies the eighteenth-century woodcut by the Japanese artist Hokusai, audaciously and comically quoting perhaps the most famous wave in art history. Ray (the female stingray) becomes a kind of surfboard for X (the male dingo) as they ride the crest of the famous wave on the way to the pub. Onus is not above taking the Mickey out of high seriousness in a very larrikin Australian way.

Another issue of great contemporary relevance in Australian environment politics is the issue of deforestation for the paper mills of Japan. The painting *X and Ray witness the sinking of the last ship carrying woodchips from Australian shores* (1992) comes from a series in which Onus was engaged when he died, called 'Disasters I would like to see'.

But Onus has many other ways of Aboriginalizing the indigenous fauna of Australia with different effect. In *Bunpa near Malwan* (1992) the lyricism of place is celebrated by the landscape occupied by butterflies with Aboriginal markings. Like the dingoes, the butterflies wear the Aboriginal team colours. But the engagement with a dominant discourse is seen in their capacity to inhabit, not so much the landscape, but its representation. This is the kind of painting that might be accused of being 'kitsch' because it is perhaps too realistically pretty for art purists. But the Aboriginal markings on the butterflies offer just enough ambivalence to disrupt any simple reception of the painting.

There is a category of paintings which extends this Aboriginalizing of the indigenous fauna in terms of displacement. In *Fishes* (1991) the fish are literally 'out of water' and travelling across the land in search of waterholes. While the narrative of the painting is a message of displacement, the experience of viewing these paintings is one that is confronted by the transgression of 'natural' or conventional conditions of realist representation. The combination of displacement and transgression means that this, and a similar painting, *Hovering till the rains come* (1995) operate in a striking meta-representational way because they stimulate a doubleness of vision in which the medium in which fishes and rays are swimming/flying is ambivalent. Dispensing with conventional panoramic views, Onus is here attempting the technique of his mentor Jack Wunuwan of seeing 'beneath the surface'. The ambivalence of this seeing is converted into a compelling picture of aspiration in *Stingrays also dream of flying* (1995), in which the stingrays hover in the sky, displaced from their natural environment but launched into the visionary realm of possibility.

When we move from space to time, from place to history, we find a much more overtly political discourse emerging. Why this is so could provide some insight into Aboriginal subjectivity in general. The place is still there to be contested; history is not, at least not so obviously. Focus of struggle though it might be, the area of visual representation is one that provides a great hope of change because it lends itself more easily to the strategies of post-colonial revision. Place is interpenetrated by history, as the Mabo and Wyk cases

demonstrate. The master discourse of Western history is a bit more intransigent. It has been disturbed by historians such as Henry Reynolds in *The Other Side of the Frontier* but in former colonies, at least those of the British Empire, the re-writing of history has usually been launched in literary writing. In painting the engagement with history, outside of its embedding in place, is perhaps more difficult.

The myth of beginnings is a point at which the contestation of history starts for Onus and he engages it with characteristic mixture of humour and rage. In **And on the Eighth Day** (1992) the toilet duck becomes a sacred object held aloft by angels, winging Botticelli-like across the painting. The picture of these winged female valkyries on the eighth day of creation is an extremely anti-imperialist painting because it parodies the edifice of Western civilization's power over the world by revealing its obsession with trivialities such as the toilet duck, which recurs in his work. The painting was apparently prompted by Onus' reaction to the Republican debate and the sight of bumper stickers saying; "Keep our flag forever." It is neither the flag of Aboriginal people nor the flag of most Australians, a point that emphasises the complexity of post-colonial discourse in a settler colony.

As we sense from '**And on the Eighth Day**' an interesting shift occurs in Onus' work when he moves from space to time. The Musquito series is much earlier than the magnificent meta-representational paintings and marks a more oppositional and more confrontational stage of resistance. Indeed the series emerges from an attempt to reinstate an Aboriginal history of resistance. While Native and African Americans had their own heroes Aborigines had no heroic figure of resistance. This is of course cause of the nature of historiography itself. This series is an attempt to interpolate history to establish such a figure. The series is powerful and suggestive, for rather than a one-dimensional figure of resistance we find a subject who focuses issues of marginality and place, of indigeneity and convictism as ambiguously intersecting tropes of otherness and subjection.

- a. *The Hangman's Nose*
- b. *In Hiding*
- c. *Quiet as Dogs*
- d. *Premonition*
- e. *White Man's Burden*
- f. *Dreams in the Garden of Allegation*
- g. *Escape*
- h. *Final journey*
- i. *Tegg's legacy*
- j. *Wanted, one Rope Thrower*

The most obvious feature of this series is the virtual impossibility of separating history from place. The strength of Musquito as a figure is his embeddedness, his oneness with place. This is most obvious in paintings like

In Hiding. But throughout the series, the intersection of colonial history and Aboriginal place is a powerful feature of the subject as a focus of resistance. But crucially, it is much more than simply oppositional, the series, by taking visual and historical forms of representation and interpolating them, transforms the discourse.

The interpenetration of Place and History becomes a feature of Onus : See for instance *Road to Redfern* (1988) and Gary Foley (1995) *National Land Council Poster* (1988)

Writing Back/Mimicry

Onus is at his most playful in **Fruit Bats** (1991). One hundred fibreglass Arnhem Land-inspired fruit bats, striped with *rarrk* are suspended on an Australian symbol — the backyard Hills Hoist. But in its own comic way, this too is meta-representational as it engages symbolism at various levels.

With their suave technique, oddball comedy and imaginative invention, such images liken Onus to surrealists such as Magritte and Dali. By enshrining the mundane, he demystifies the enshrined. With this installation Onus parodied the preciousness of high art, attitudes to kitsch, the mystique created around Aboriginal art, and the vagaries of the Aboriginal art industry.

So in a way, Lin Onus embodies the conflicting and overlapping discourses of post-colonialism and postmodernism particularly in the ways in which the images can be read. While we may think of postmodernism and post-colonialism as some kind of objective realities, they are both essentially reading practices, practices of consumption as much as production that are amenable to different interpretations. In his disruption of and playfulness with painting conventions his practice demonstrates the skepticism with the master discourses of European representation and through them the discourse of western hegemony.

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